ELTE

AMONG THE RUINS OF HOPE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LÁSZLÓ KRASZNAHORKAI'S OEUVRE

PROGRAM

ABSTRACTS

Tuesday, 10 November

09:00–09:10
OPENING

Session 1
Chair: Edit Zsadányi

09:10–09:35 MARTA PATÓ: *László Krasznahorkai: Czech Reception, Translation, and Central European 'Derailed' Narratives*

09:35–10:00 MAGDALENA ROGUSKA-NÉMETH: *From a Peripheral Voice to World Literature: The Polish Reception and Canonization of László Krasznahorkai*

10:00–10:25 IVAN HRISTOV: *László Krasznahorkai – The Reception of a World Writer in Bulgaria*

10:25–10:45
DISCUSSION

10:45–11:05
COFFEE

Session 2
Chair: Bran Nicol

11:05–11:30 Edit Zsadányi: *Love, Couples, and Coupled Narratives in Krasznahorkai's Fiction*

11:30–11:55 Marko Čudić: *Manifestations of the Evil in László Krasznahorkai's Early Short Stories: a Case Study*

11:55–12:20 Tibor Kosztolánczy: *(Not So) Confidential Observations of a Close Reader: On László Krasznahorkai's Csapdás Rozi*

12:20–12:45 Dávid Szolláth: *The Technique of Seduction: Motivating the Reader in Krasznahorkai*

12:45–13:10
DISCUSSION

13:10–14:30
LUNCH

Session 3
Chair: Marko Čudić

14:30–14:55 Bran Nicol: *Apocalypse Then: Encapsulating Krasznahorkai*

14:55–15.20 János Szávai: *Chaos versus Cosmos*

15:20–15:45 János Kenyeres: *Winter without Spring: From Cosmic Order to the Demonic World in The Melancholy of Resistance*

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DISCUSSION

18:00
DINNER

Wednesday, 11 November

Session 1
Chair: László Bengi

09:00–9:25 Mária Bartal: *Tidy Yards, Clean Towns: Intersectional Precarity and the Politics of Order in László Krasznahorkai's The Melancholy of Resistance and* Herscht 07769

09:25–09:50 Christoph Leitgeb: *Melancholy and the Aesthetics of Resistance*

09:50–10:15 Antonio Sciacovelli: *„Dear Angel, I have been looking for you for such a long time". Angels in the Literary Work of László Krasznahorkai*

10:15–10:40 Tímea Murzsa: *The Figures of the 'Idiot' Saviour in the Prose of László Krasznahorkai*

10:40–11:00
DISCUSSION

11:00–11:25
COFFEE

Session 2
Chair: Mária Bartal

11:25–11:50 Imre Zsolt Lengyel: *"We don't know about angels, yet we do know about stonemasons": Immanence and Transcendence in* Seiobo There Below

11:50–12:15 Gábor Schein: *When Animals Hunt: Further Insights into László Krasznahorkai's Philosophy of Nature and Anthropological Perspective*

12:15–12:40 András Kányádi: *Constructs of Paranoia: the Tower and the Den*

12:40–13:00
DISCUSSION

13:30–15.00
LUNCH

Session 3
Chair: Gábor Schein

15:00–15:25 Željko Senković: *Writing Instead of Returning. Odysseus, Deterritorialization, and the Text as Ithaca in the Novels of László Krasznahorkai*

15:25–15:50 Dániel Mizsur: *Narrative and Telos: The Transformation of Teleology in the Works of László Krasznahorkai*

15:50–16:15 Mátyás B. Kiss: *Territorial Violence in Krasznahorkai's Prose*

16:15–16:35
DISCUSSION

Thursday, 12 November

Session 1
Chair: Gábor Tamás Molnár

9:00–9:25 László Bengi: *Transmedia Effects in Krasznahorkai's Narratives*

9:25–9:50 János Mekis D.: *Transcendence and Verbosity: László Krasznahorkai's Experiment with Thought and Words*

9:50–10:15 Tibor Gintli: *The Role and Variations of the Monologue in Krasznahorkai's Prose*

10:15–10:35 Beatrix Visy: *Attuned to the Nation – Nation, Identity and Satirical Representation in the Krasznahorkai's Work*

10:35–10:55
DISCUSSION

10:55–11:15
COFFEE

Session 2
Chair: Tibor Gintli

11:15–11:40 Reichert Gábor: *On the Referential Background of* Zsömle odavan [Zsömle Is Gone]

11:40–12:05 Gábor Tamás Molnár: *Lepidoptera, Literature, and Life in László Krasznahorkai's* A magyar nemzet biztonsága [The Security of the Hungarian Nation]

12:05–12:30 Flóra Szilák: *All because of Ten Metres. A Decades-long Train Ride to Ruhleben*

12:30–12:50
DISCUSSION

12:50–13:00
CLOSING REMARKS

13:00
LUNCH

Mátyás B. Kiss

Territorial Violence in Krasznahorkai's Prose

My presentation focuses on one of László Krasznahorkai's early short stories, titled Herman, the Game Warden [Herman, a vadőr]. This text is closely related to another of Krasznahorkai's early short stories, The Death of a Craft [A mesterségnek vége], which tells the same story from a different perspective. The central motifs of Herman, the Game Warden are woven into two later works: the novels The Last Wolf [Az utolsó farkas] and Herscht 07769.

In my presentation, I focus on the changing relationship between humans and animals, with particular emphasis on the violent aspects of this relationship. Human society seeks to bring nature under control, condemning animals deemed harmful to extermination, though at the same time animals are also entering human spaces. However, the selected texts not only depict the conflictual relationship between humans and animals, but also express compassion for animals, while challenging anthropocentric logic. The distinction between humans and animals blurs; Herman and Florian Herscht leave human society behind, becoming more like wild animals themselves. For the characters, this process of deterritorialization also entails a violent confrontation with their former environment. Meanwhile, people's behaviour shows signs of reterritorialising violence. This may manifest itself not only towards animals, but also towards other people, as in the world of *Herscht 07769*: the terrorist acts of the neo-Nazi group are likewise motivated by territorially rooted aggression.

My presentation examines the clash and overlap between human and animal territories, whilst also exploring ways of making the boundaries between human and animal existence more permeable and challenging anthropocentric ways of thinking.

Mária Bartal

Tidy Yards, Clean Towns: Intersectional Precarity and the Politics of Order in László Krasznahorkai's The Melancholy of Resistance *and* Herscht 07769

László Krasznahorkai's fiction, honoured with the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature for its vision of 'apocalyptic terror', is usually read through metaphysical frames: cosmic decay, the failure of harmony, the arrival of chaos. This paper reads two novels written three decades apart, *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája] (1989) and *Herscht 07769* (2021), as studies of who is most exposed when a provincial order collapses and is rebuilt. Both centre on men regarded by their communities as simple-minded, János Valuska and Florian Herscht. Each is attached to a paternal figure obsessed with music, and each is enlisted by an authoritarian project that speaks the language of cleanliness: Mrs Eszter's movement 'A Tidy Yard, an Orderly House' and the Boss's graffiti-cleaning firm, *Alles wird rein*. Drawing on intersectional methodology (Collins; Cooke and Nyhagen), feminist dialogues between post-colonial and post-socialist theory (Koobak, Tlostanova and Thapar-Björkert), and disability studies, I argue that cognitive difference, class, gender and peripheral location combine in these novels to produce positions of dispensability. Mrs Eszter, a woman who seizes power through conspicuously masculine codes, shows why such a reading cannot be reduced to a critique of patriarchy; it must also interrogate the novel's own gendered imagination. Extending Edit Zsadányi's Spivakian model of subaltern articulation from *Satantango* [Sátántangó] to these later texts, I examine how Krasznahorkai's long sentence absorbs the halting speech of those it represents while exposing the limits of speaking on their behalf. The comparison suggests a continuity across the post-socialist transition: in Krasznahorkai's provinces, the rhetoric of order repeatedly finds its instruments among the most vulnerable.

László Bengi
Transmedia Effects in Krasznahorkai's Narratives

The works of László Krasznahorkai frequently exceed the formal boundaries of the book, expanding the textual space through allusions, performative gestures, and references. These strategies establish connections not only between different works, but also across different media. While they do not generally create a transmedial universe in the narrower sense of the term, they nevertheless reconfigure the reading process. My presentation examines how such processes affect the relationship between description and action, as well as between language and representation, in selected examples from Krasznahorkai's narratives.

Marko Čudić
Manifestations of Evil in László Krasznahorkai's Early Short Stories: a Case Study

This paper examines the manifestations of evil in two early short stories by László Krasznahorkai. Unlike Krasznahorkai's first two novels, in which the central position is given to the problem of systemic evil, sometimes supported by individual, human – all too human – evil, in the early short stories of this prominent writer, the problem of individual evil is not just the central motive: it also represents the driving principle of the storytelling itself. Specifically, the core of my analysis is dedicated to two short stories about Herman, the gamekeeper, in which Herman's specific 'reverse conversion', an individual turning point that eventually leads him to evil, to committing crime, is seen from two completely different points of view. The main ethical problem, however, lies in the fact that Herman is convinced that he is actually doing evil for the sake of some higher good. All this is the result of Herman's 'sin of pride', which consists in the fact that he has raised his unique craftsmanship and extraordinary talent to a sacral level. Through a poetic, ethical and philosophical view of this problem, my paper tries to point out the essentially universal evil that is hidden in such a delusion.

Tibor Gintli
The Role and Variations of the Monologue in Krasznahorkai's Prose

When reading Krasznahorkai's works, one is struck by the prominent role played by the monologue amongst the components that make up the text, while the extent and significance of the dialogue diminish dramatically. We also find examples where the entire text of a short story or novella consists of a single monologue. This presentation examines the functions and various manifestations of the striking dominance of the monologue. It outlines the characteristic situations in which monologues are formulated, and attempts to illustrate the typical tones, stylistic features and perspectives that characterise them. I pay particular attention to the distinctive features of the various versions, as well as to the different manifestations of humour. Furthermore, I raise the question of whether the preference for the monologue can be understood as an ironic act of self-reflection within the author's oeuvre.

Ivan Hristov
László Krasznahorkai – The Reception of a World Writer in Bulgaria

The paper will trace the appearance and reception in Bulgaria of the Hungarian Nobel laureate László Krasznahorkai. Relying on the concept of 'world literature', the analysis will attempt to examine the role of translation as a vehicle for universalization. An attempt will be made to highlight issues related to the concepts of centre – periphery, major literatures – minor literatures, colonizers and the colonized. By examining the issue of 'literary visibility', the process of how a world writer from a small literature becomes canon-forming for another small literature will be explored.

András Kányádi
Constructs of Paranoia: the Tower and the Den

"When I am not reading Kafka I am thinking about Kafka. When I am not thinking about Kafka I miss thinking about him. Having missed thinking about him for a while, I take him out and read him again." This quotation from last year's Nobel prize-winning Hungarian writer urges us to shed light on a possible intertextual dialogue between László Krasznahorkai's *Spadework for a Palace* [Aprómunka egy palotáért] (2018) and Franz Kafka's *The Burrow* [Der Bau] (1923). The harassed librarian and the undefined burrowing animal strive to build a perfect, secure construct in order to hide from the threatening outside world. In their efforts to become 'castle keepers', the narrators are struggling with madness, in a universe near to collapse. Both texts prove to be stirring parables about the human condition, artistic creation and the myth of the Minotaur.

János Kenyeres
Winter without Spring: From Cosmic Order to the Demonic World in The Melancholy of Resistance

This paper examines László Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája] through Northrop Frye's theory of archetypal criticism, focusing on the mythos of winter, the ironic mode and the opposition between apocalyptic and demonic imagery. The paper argues that Krasznahorkai invokes traditional archetypal patterns of cosmic order, descent, social disintegration and renewal while systematically frustrating their expected resolutions. Valuska's cosmological vision and Eszter's search for musical harmony articulate a longing for an intelligible order, whereas the whale, the Prince, and the violent crowd transform the town into a representation of Frye's demonic world. The restoration of social order appears structurally to promise the movement towards regeneration characteristic of comedy, but instead becomes an ironic parody of comic renewal: the violence of the crowd is succeeded by a coercive social order rather than a regenerated community. Krasznahorkai thus retains the cyclical structures of myth while denying their traditional movement from winter towards spring, creating an ironic world in which the desire for order persists but the promise of regeneration remains unfulfilled.

Tibor Kosztolánczy
(Not So) Confidential Observations of a Close Reader: On László Krasznahorkai's Csapdás Rozi

This presentation addresses the initial hermeticism of László Krasznahorkai's short story *Rozi with a Trap* [Csapdás Rozi], which appears barely intelligible upon a first reading. The text first presents itself merely as a small-town narrative of surveillance and stalking driven by obscure motives; consequently, the factors triggering the characters' obsession-like anxiety within the monotonous routine of everyday life remain entirely opaque. Through successive rereadings, however, it becomes evident that the short story is structured around three interior monologues. Nevertheless, the text leaves the identity of the speakers ambiguous, as well as the exact relationship between them. I argue that these readerly uncertainties originate primarily from the bewildering structural and stylistic similarities between the monologues. Over time, however, I also noticed certain brief textual insertions of a few lines that diverged from the specific characteristics of the accounts. Ultimately, these insertions helped me to identify the individual speakers and outline their respective characters.

In connection with the interpretive difficulties raised by the short story, this presentation raises the question of whether *Rozi with a Trap* can be classified as a short story at all, or if the work should rather be viewed as a kind of parable or world model. This is because the aforementioned insertions clearly attest to the speakers' ontological and worldview crises. Much like many other figures in Krasznahorkai's oeuvre, they seek order in the world, yet instead of finding it, they immerse themselves in substitute ac-

tivities and phantasmagorias. Their false assumptions eventually trigger the crime—an action textually foreshadowed by the narrative—which fulfils the destiny of two characters. The text's outcome suggests that their missions were flawed, and the scrutiny of fate's secrets is a delusion. This ultimately poses the question: is there any valid transcendent dimension, overarching worldview, perspective or organizing principle above the earthly realm?

Christoph Leitgeb

Melancholy and the Aesthetics of Resistance

László Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája] was first published in 1989. At this significant historical juncture, a 'cult book' with a strikingly similar title was still widely read by German-speaking scholars: Peter Weiss's *The Aesthetics of Resistance* [Die Ästhetik des Widerstands]. The third and final volume of this literary monument to the victims of left-wing resistance against Spanish fascism and German National Socialism had been published in 1981.

Several aspects of the two novels' poetics invite comparison. At first glance, both authors structure their texts in a complicated way, employing strikingly long sentences and largely dispensing with paragraph breaks. Both reject the aesthetic conventions of 'socialist realism' and share an avant-garde tendency to represent their protagonists' thinking through 'internal focalisation'. Both are renowned for their references to 'world literature' (Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Kafka), as well as for their intermedial engagement with visual art (Dürer, Bruegel, Bosch). Both authors bear witness to the uncanny threat of totalitarianism and society's disintegration. Their protagonists pursue and question 'grand ideas' and associate resistance with melancholy.

Building on these commonalities, my presentation will use quotations from Peter Weiss in an attempt to illuminate László Krasznahorkai's work, and vice versa. If successful, this attempt will ultimately touch on generational, geographical, and political divides that shape different ways of engaging with – or disengaging from – the desire to change society.

Imre Zsolt Lengyel

"We don't know about angels, yet we do know about stonemasons": Immanence and Transcendence in Seiobo There Below

Seiobo There Below [Seiobo járt odalent] is built around a series of unresolved tensions. Is it a sequence of short stories or a novel? Are its constituent parts variations on a single idea, or do they stage conflicting alternatives? Are its encounters with art occasions for portraying distinctive characters and situations, or are the characters themselves vessels for propositions about art? Are the text's frequent excursions into the mechanics of cultural and craft practice central to its meaning, or merely its ornament? Building on existing scholarship, I examine these questions as a way of asking what kind of writing *Seiobo There Below* is – and whether the features that make this classification difficult should be read as flaws or as constitutive traits of the text. I approach these dilemmas by examining what I take to be the key question of the text: the ontological status it grants to a superhuman realm, and how that status bears on its concept of art. Krasznahorkai, I argue, moves away from mainstream (modern, Euro-Atlantic) notions of art in two directions at once: toward transcendence, and toward a heightened attentiveness to the material, practical, and institutional dimensions of artmaking. This ambivalence, far from being incidental, is central to interpreting the book, and working through it opens up broader insights into Krasznahorkai's literary project.

Magdalena Roguska-Németh
From a Peripheral Voice to World Literature: The Polish Reception and Canonization of László Krasznahorkai

This paper examines the transformation in the perception of László Krasznahorkai's oeuvre, tracing his evolution from a peripheral voice – originally positioned as a niche author – into a central figure of contemporary world literature. Focusing on his reception in Poland, the study maps the key stages of this shift over time.

The paper highlights the crucial role of major international literary awards, such as the International Booker Prize and the Nobel Prize in Literature. It shows how these honours shaped critical discussion and established Krasznahorkai's canonical status in Poland. By analyzing Polish literary reviews, publication histories and critical essays, the study shows how initial views of Krasznahorkai as a minority-interest writer gave way to a universal recognition of his work, offering broader insights into the mechanisms of international canonization.

János D. Mekis
Transcendence and Verbosity: László Krasznahorkai's Experiment with Thought and Words

The connection between transcendence—recognizable as an underlying dimension that bestows meaning, which may be either yearned for or rejected—and the process-like flow of speech (which at times barely allows for a breath) can be identified as one of the fundamental structural elements in László Krasznahorkai's art. Within his body of work, the boundaries of the novel as a genre shift and expand in various directions. A key aspect of this is the elevation of the 'sentence'—liberated from the functional rhythm of narrative-driven communication—to the status of a central organizing principle; a form that, as the author has noted on several occasions, actually follows the rhythm of living, spoken language. In this presentation, I explore how this proliferating, speech-like quality of modern discourse, sometimes reinforced by patterns of oratory, transforms into a poetics within a narrative model that presents metaphysical transcendence (a 'looking beyond') as a possibility that is, by turns, both hopeful and terrifying.

Dániel Mizsur
Narrative and Telos: The Transformation of Teleology in the Works of László Krasznahorkai

In many of László Krasznahorkai's works, we find narratives that are particularly interesting from the teleological perspective. In stories of flight and pursuit, not only does the specific goal of the movement often remain unknown, but it also becomes unclear what triggers the pursuit or flight, who the characters involved are, and what their ultimate destination is. As a result, the traditional concepts of purpose and purposive action are also transformed: the narrative can maintain the form of goal-directed movement even when its ultimate goal becomes inaccessible or indeterminate.

This raises the question of how the transformation of teleology relates to narrative structure, particularly to the problem of narrative closure. In my presentation, I examine Krasznahorkai's narratives – in which the relationship between goal-directed movement and narrative closure becomes problematic – from the perspective of the Greek concept of *telos*. Primarily through an analysis of selected texts from *Chasing Homer* [Mindig Homérosznak], *Satantango* [Sátántangó] and *Relations of Grace* [Kegyelmi viszonyok], I will examine how the relationship between the goal, goal-directed movement, and the narrative ending is transformed.

Gábor Tamás Molnár
Lepidoptera, Literature, and Life in László Krasznahorkai's The Security of the Hungarian Nation

Butterflies play a central role in Krasznahorkai's short novel published in 2025, ironically titled *The Security of the Hungarian Nation* [A magyar nemzet biztonsága]. The narrative is internally focalized through a disabled and socially isolated lepidopterologist whose lifelong obsession with butterflies is clearly linked to his own life situation. He makes this parallel clear by ranting about "the horrifying will that drives every living thing *forward*, but in a way that turns this movement into a maniacal repetition of itself..." (59, emphasis in original). Butterflies seem exempt from this terrible cycle of life in the sense that they "*don't claw, don't sting, don't bite*" (67, emphasis in original), and they seem to embody a pure aesthetic beauty separate from the pragmatic and merciless struggle for life: "they, lepidopterologists, also see the beautiful, poetic nature of butterflies, they have a heart made of flesh, not of stone" (166).

This presentation will look at some of the narratological, linguistic and thematic issues that complicate the simple contrast between practicality and aesthetics, or life and literature. These issues include the main character's admission of killing the butterflies he so adores, the crucial metafictional role a writer named Krasznahorkai plays in the book, the main character's explicitly different attitudes toward caterpillars versus adult butterflies, and even the difficulty of translating terminological distinctions such as *pillangó* and *lepke* (a synecdochic pair) into English. This last distinction plays a significant role in the text and is embedded in a discussion of the distance between words and things, concepts and reality, near the end. In addition to the textual complications within the novel, my presentation will rely on the tradition of symbolic or allegorical representation of lepidoptera in modern prose, in works by Virginia Woolf, Vladimir Nabokov, Annie Dillard, W. G. Sebald and others.

Tímea Murzsa
The Figures of the 'Idiot' Saviour in the Prose of László Krasznahorkai

In my lecture, the figures of the 'idiot' saviour in László Krasznahorkai's *Satantango* [Sátántangó]*, Herscht 07769*, and *The Security of the Hungarian Nation* [A magyar nemzet biztonsága] will be examined. The focus will be on Irimiás and Petrina *(Satantango),* Herscht *(Herscht 07769),* and András *(The Security of the Hungarian Nation).* Their characters show alignments with Dostoevsky's 'Idiot', a Christ-like figure, Prince Myshkin. In the Nobel Prize winner's works, Dostoevsky's impact is evident not only in interpretations, such as in István Margócsy's or Sándor Radnóti's writings, but also in the speech Krasznahorkai gave at the Nobel Prize presentation. In his case, however, the tradition of the Russian writer is not adapted uncritically: we witness the deconstruction of the image of Christ. This correlates with the post-modern idea of doubting the existence and validity of the grand récit, such as salvation history. Not independently of postmodernism, it is also possible to interpret the 'idiot' saviour's character as subaltern – in my lecture I will speak about how this term should be modified in our case. Finally, I will show the transtextual connections between Krasznahorkai's chosen texts and other modern and contemporary Hungarian books that work with similar figures.

Bran Nicol
Apocalypse Then: Encapsulating Krasznahorkai

A post-Nobel Prize assessment of László Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája] complicates the novel's sense of temporality and geography. A publication date of 1989 for a Hungarian novel which depicts social disintegration and authoritarian power cannot but be significant, and invite allegorical reading, given the end of the Cold War that year. But reading the novel in 2026, when a new form – or at least new sources – of social breakdown and authoritarian politics are so pervasive, is for *The Melancholy of Resistance* to be

'reactivated', to be recast as a commentary on our times now – as well as becoming a more 'global' text following its author's post-Nobel renown.

But Krasznahorkai's work is strikingly different from the kind of thematised globalisation performed by the novelists featured in Adam Kirsch's *The Global Novel* (2026) (e.g. Murakami, Ferrante, or Houellebecq). *The Melancholy of Resistance* is, perhaps surprisingly, something more traditional: an exemplification of Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of what distinguishes the novel as a genre, namely a polyphonic, at times carnivalesque, continually evolving anti-genre that mirrors the complexities of real social life. Or, to put it in the terms of Timothy Bewes's more recent Bakhtinian theory of the novel, advanced in his book *Free Indirect: The Novel in a Postfictional Age* (2022), Krasznahorkai's writing demonstrates how the novel thinks.

In particular, as I want to explore in this talk, *The Melancholy of Resistance* – as well as other novels in Krasznahorkai's loose, 'just one book', tetralogy – thinks the apocalypse. The apocalyptic frame for reading Krasznahorkai was established by Susan Sontag's epithet for his status as 'the contemporary Hungarian master of the apocalypse', coined as puff copy for the 2000 American edition of George Szirtes's magnificent 1998 translation of *The Melancholy of Resistance* (and a comment which itself has been reactivated many times since Krasznahorkai won the International Booker Prize in 2015 and the Nobel Prize in 2025). But in approaching the novel this way, are we dealing with apocalypse 1989, or 2000, or 2026? Is apocalypse even the best description? Overall, this talk explores the desire to capture the essence of any novel and the difficulty of doing so, especially one as strange, complex, and indeed strangely typical, as *The Melancholy of Resistance*.

Marta Pató

László Krasznahorkai: Czech Reception, Translation, and Central European 'Derailed' Narratives

This lecture explores the reception and poetics of Hungarian novelist László Krasznahorkai within the Czech cultural space. It highlights the institutional networks (cultural institutes, universities, journals) and key individuals—chiefly translator Simona Kolmanová—vital to his mediation. The presentation addresses three dimensions of his Czech reception: cinematic transmediality with Béla Tarr, the dual tension between the transcendent and the topical, and comparative perspectives across Czech, Slovak, English and French literary contexts. Applying Xavier Galmiche's theory of the post-1989 'derailed narrative', the talk compares Krasznahorkai with Jáchym Topol and Yuri Andrukhovych. It explores recurring tropes of the carnival, the circus, and Krasznahorkai's 'neo-multi-apocalyptic' aesthetic, concluding with the 'pleasure principle' uniting author and reader in the shared joy of storytelling.

Gábor Reichert

On the Referential Background of Zsömle Is Gone

It is well known that László Krasznahorkai based the protagonist of his novel *Zsömle Is Gone* [Zsömle odavan], published in 2024, on a real person. (The novel is expected to be published in English this year, translated by Ottilie Mulzet.) The character of József Kada was inspired by a man named József Daka, who lived from 1919 to 2016—and claimed to be a descendant of King Béla IV of Hungary—and who made tabloid headlines in 2010 when he announced his 'official' claim to the crown to the Hungarian National Assembly. A common device in Krasznahorkai's prose is the blurring of the boundary between so-called 'reality' and so-called 'fiction'. However, I feel that *Zsömle Is Gone* is an exceptional work within his oeuvre, in that it consistently demonstrates that the story elements depicted are, almost without exception, drawn from

contemporary Hungarian reality. The result is not a realist novel, but a distorted image pieced together from half-truths, which, even in its text, evokes the mindset of a post-factual world. In my presentation, I intend to illustrate how this worldview functions within the novel.

Gábor Schein

When Animals Hunt: Further Insights into László Krasznahorkai's Philosophy of Nature and Anthropological Perspective

The concept of nature in László Krasznahorkai's prose is just as complex as it is inescapable if one wishes to gain a deeper understanding of the philosophical questions raised by his prose. In this prose, nature signifies an order inherent within itself, which raises the question of the human capacity to comprehend and describe that order. On the other hand, the reading experience of Krasznahorkai's very long sentences, which in many cases are as long as the work itself, is also linked to the concept of nature perceptible here. Krasznahorkai has often emphasised that his long sentences do not arise as literary phenomena, but develop according to the order of the functioning of the brain and of breathing. This study seeks to assess this complexity, before highlighting a single motif—that of the hunt—which enables us to better understand the concept of nature in its own existence and the human element within it in Krasznahorkai's prose. Three short stories will be examined in greater detail: *Herman, the Game Warden* [Herman, a vadőr], *The Last Wolf* [Az utolsó farkas] and *Kamo-Hunter* [A kamovadász]. The protagonist of all three stories is a hunter; in the first two this is a man, while in the third it is a special bird.

Antonio Sciacovelli

"Dear Angel, I have been looking for you for such a long time." Angels in the Literary Work of László Krasznahorkai

This presentation examines the 'Angels' in László Krasznahorkai's novels *Satantango* [Sátántangó] (1985), *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája] (1989) and *War and War* [Háború és háború] (1999), as well as in his Nobel Prize lecture (2025) and his most recent novel *The Security of the Hungarian Nation* [A magyar nemzet biztonsága] (2025). In the evolution of the author's narrative conception, the 'angelic' figures also take on different qualities and forms, playing central roles in linking the different event-levels that constitute the plot of the works in question. Krasznahorkai states, in his Stockholm speech, that "the angels of old are no more, there are only the new ones, [...] our angels are these new ones, and, having lost their wings, they [...] walk among us in simple street clothes." These angelic figures, therefore, breaking out from the tradition of Judeo-Christian angelology, become elements of a new angelology that significantly permeates Krasznahorkai's works. Characters such as Estike in *Satantango*, Valuska in *Melancholy of Resistance*, and Gyuri Szabó in *War and War* properly belong to this new angelological conception, and their characteristics are aptly summarized in the section of the Stockholm speech dedicated to 'Angels'. Kasser, Bengazza, Falke and Toot, on the other hand, play a different role in the manuscript found by György Korin in *War and War*: escaping from war, they traverse time not in a linear sequence – that is, not by moving from the earliest era to the most recent times – but in a 'zigzag' pattern, crossing eras and space in an unpredictable way. One of my objectives is also to offer an overview of the critical commentary on Krasznahorkai's literary works regarding this topic, drawing connections between a substantial number of novels that can be viewed as parts of a large literary project, from *Satantango* to *The Security of the Hungarian Nation*.

Željko Senković
Odysseus, Deterritorialization, and the Text as Ithaca in the Novels of László Krasznahorkai

This presentation examines the transformation of the Odyssean figure of return into a paradigm of endless displacement in the fiction of László Krasznahorkai. In Homer, Odysseus embodies a world structured by teleology, in which time enables return and identity is restored through homecoming. Modern philosophy — principally that of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Benjamin — disrupts this structure by dissolving the certainty of return and exposing time as dispersion rather than completion. Within this shift, the article argues, Krasznahorkai's major novels constitute an extended literary response in which writing replaces return as the primary mode of existence: the text no longer represents the journey but becomes its continuation, without closure or final destination. Through sustained readings of *War and War* [Háború és háború], *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* [Báró Wenckheim hazatér], *Seiobo There Below* [Seiobo járt odalent], *Herscht 07769, The World Goes On* [Megy a világ] and *Satantango* [Sátántangó], I will also consider several topics: that Krasznahorkai's prose enacts a post-teleological ontology of time as slow entropy; that beauty, in *Seiobo*, emerges as a fragile, post-religious trace of transcendence without redemptive power, articulated through what is here called an aesthetics of vanishing; that the syntax of the sentence is not the vehicle but the primary site of Krasznahorkai's ontological argument, such that form and content become strictly indistinguishable; and that the absence of a single, capitalized antagonist — the diffuseness of menace across Krasznahorkai's narrative worlds — constitutes a distinctly contemporary phenomenology of dread that supersedes the totalitarian models inherited from twentieth-century political philosophy.

János Szávai
Chaos versus Cosmos

In the first chapter of *The Melancholy of Resistance* [Az ellenállás melankóliája], (this part is not included in Béla Tarr's film, *Werckmeister Harmonies*) the widow Pflaum is returning home from the village to her hometown. The train is delayed and when it finally arrives, it is full of dangerous figures, one of whom rudely attacks the fifty-eight-year-old widow. Everything is extraordinary, there is no order anywhere. The widow finally gets home, finds peace in her beautiful little apartment, and happily watches television. Her favourite show is on, operetta. *The Countess Marica*. At the end of the play, Count Tasziló and Countess Marica finally find each other. Order is restored.

The other contrast will appear in the centre of the novel: the struggle of the music director with Bach's work, with the perfection of order.

This schema, the metaphor of chaos versus cosmos can be found in almost all of Krasznahorkai's writings.

Flóra Szilák
All because of Ten Metres. A Decades-long Train Ride to Ruhleben

Professor Astrid Söderbergh Widding opened the 2025 Nobel Prize award ceremony with these words: "Through knowledge, integrity and excellence, through creativity and inspiration, the laureates offer hope. They remind us that it is possible, through different paths, to address and come to terms with the many global challenges we face today."

A few days earlier László Krasznahorkai had introduced his Nobel Lecture by saying: "On receiving the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature, I originally wished to share my thoughts with you on the subject of hope, but as my stores of hope have definitively come to an end, I will now speak about angels."

As this juxtaposition suggests, the lecture simultaneously inhabits the discursive space prescribed for it by the official rhetoric surrounding the Nobel Prize, and resists the

expectations embedded within that space. In this respect, it already recalls the anonymous academic lecturer of the 1993 short story *Universal Theseus* [A Théseus-általános], who similarly both resists and fulfils the demands imposed upon him.

In my presentation, I offer a close reading of Part III of the Nobel Lecture alongside *Universal Theseus*, on which it is based, examining the ways in which the Lecture evokes and modifies the short story. I seek to explore what this intertextual dialogue reveals about Krasznahorkai's understanding of hope – and about rebellion – as well as about the possibility of confronting and overcoming the global challenges, invoked by the Nobel discourse.

Dávid Szolláth

The Technique of Seduction: Motivating the Reader in Krasznahorkai

Imagine a seducer who reveals all their tricks and ploys, yet still retains their allure. This presentation forms the second part of a two-part study. In the first part, published in the Krasznahorkai issue of Literatura (No. 1, 2026), we examined the narrative techniques of slowing down and delaying, which are characteristic of Krasznahorkai's work. Here, however, we turn our attention to the antidotes to narrative deceleration. We ask what means can be used to motivate or entice the reader — that is, how the text persuades the reader to continue despite the long sentences, digressions, and occasionally surprisingly lengthy passages of detail. This presentation discusses well-known narrative clichés and dramaturgical devices such as prolepsis, analepsis, in medias res, the narrative hook, the cliffhanger, the red herring, and Chekhov's gun. Although Krasznahorkai's novels treat these elements ironically, they still rely on the mechanisms by which they achieve their effects. The presentation will explore how an exposed literary toolkit can be effective in creating engaging and highly successful works.

Beatrix Visy

Attuned to the Nation – Nation, Identity and Satirical Representation in Krasznahorkai's Work

With the strengthening (or turn) of the satirical-parodistic mode of representation, from the second half of the 2010s onwards, the concept of nation, as well as issues of the national identity and national characterology, have increasingly come to the forefront of Krasznahorkai's works. Compared to the earlier pieces of his oeuvre, starting with the novel *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* [Báró Wenckheim hazatér] (2016), much more open, powerful, and subversive forms of irony and satire appear, and in many cases this satire targets the appropriated, distortedly interpreted concept of nation, patriotism and national spirit. The apocalyptic visions take shape in connection with the mentality, cultural state, and extremist ideologies of small towns and peripheral regions. The artistic tradition and contemporary art are also appropriated, and misinterpreted, in these works.

In my presentation, I discuss satirical-ironic representations of the nation, national identity and art, and Krasznahorkai's carnival apocalypticism on the basis of *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* and *Herscht 07769* [Herscht 07769], as well as *Zsömle is Gone* [Zsömle odavan] and *The Safety of the Hungarian Nation* [A magyar nemzet biztonsága].

Edit Zsadányi

Love, Couples, and Coupled Narratives in Krasznahorkai's Fiction

In my presentation, I examine works in which love and male-female relationships play an important role. I will analyze a segment of the widely studied novel *Satantango* [Sátántangó] that has received little attention: specifically, the character of Mrs. Schmidt and her relationship with Irimiás. I will also examine the relationship between Lu Shan-li and the narrator-traveller in the novel *Prisoner of Urga* [Az urgai fogoly]; finally, I will take a closer look at the tragicomic love between Marika and the baron in the novel *Baron*

Wenckheim's Homecoming [Báró Wenckheim hazatér]. In the case of the latter two novels, the theme of love stands at the centre of the narrative composition.

In my presentation, I will demonstrate that in the works under examination, the relationship between two people appears not only thematically but also in the form of paired textual passages that refer to and reflect upon one another. In Mrs. Schmidt's narrative, we see Irimiás, and among Irimiás's represented thoughts is the section about Mrs. Schmidt; similarly, the lines of thought of Lu Shan-li and the traveller in China, as well as those of Baron Wenckheim and Marika, appear as textual couples – as paired monologues.