

# Central European Culture in Abstract and Concrete Representation

## summer semester 2012

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**Course description:** A certain Slovak photographer has captured a moment where an older man is walking through a seemingly endless field, on one leg. The other leg is being carried by someone much younger, maybe his grandson. How far away is their destination? How did the photographer come upon this moment? Indeed, how is lasting culture created by individual dreams, spaces of absurdity and irrationality and ultimately, by time itself? Whereas snow in a Czech setting may be synonymous with innocence and a religious milieu, it is just as likely that alternative culture will be found, but this time inside suitcases as Hungary demonstrates. This course journeys through the Visegrad countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary + Slovenia to experience the outer limits of culture in its abstract and more concrete representations. The literature will be supplemented with photographs, music and film.

**Readings:** Readers can be purchased...

### Grading policy

Class participation:	25%
In-class presentations (2):	25%
Mid-term project:	25 %
Final paper:	25%

## Schedule of classes

### DATE - Introduction

#### DATE – On the Craft of Writing

Slovenia	Meta Kušar – “4.,” “8.,” “19.,” “26.” Edvard Kocbek – “Death of Words,” “Microphone in the Wall” France Prešeren – “To the Poet”
Poland	Tadeusz Rozewicz – “Proofs” Leszek Engelking – “Briefing” Zbigniew Herbert – “Elegy for the Departure of Pen, Ink and Lamp” Czesław Miłosz – “Ars Poetica?”
Hungary	Mónika Mesterházi – “Echo (I Distance Myself)”
Slovak Republic	Rudolf Sloboda – “The White Dog”
Czech Republic	Vladimír Holan – “She Asked You”

#### DATE - Haiku

Slovenia	Meta Kušar – “16.,” “23.,” “54.” Primož Repar – “Haiku” Brane Senegačnik – “Sonata Facile”
Poland	Leszek Engelking – “Weather-Forecast”
Hungary	Iván Mándy – “At the Movies with Father”
Czech Republic	Věra Linhartová – “I am looking for something to give you,” “Finally words are simple”

Slovak Republic Franz Kafka – “Absent-minded Window-gazing”  
Braňo Hochel – “Microstories”

### **DATE - Dream Sequences in the Center of Europe**

Czech Republic Franz Kafka – “A Dream”  
Daniela Hodrová – “I See a Great City...”  
Jaroslav Seifert – “Fingerprints”  
Slovenia Meta Kušar – “5.”  
Branko Gradišnik – “Oeopath”  
Poland Czeslaw Milosz – “Esse”

### **DATE – The Influence of Irrationality**

Czech Republic Franz Kafka – “Give it Up!,” “Resolutions”  
Michal Ajvaz – “Bird”  
Hungary Péter Nádas – “Family Portrait against a Purple Sunset”  
Lajos Grendel – “The Contents of Suitcases”  
Poland Tadeusz Rozewicz – “Transformations”  
Agnieszka Drotkiewicz – “Paris London Dachau”  
Slovak Republic Dominik Tatarka – “Mystery”  
Dušan Mitana – “On the Threshold”  
Slovenia Tomaž Šalamun – “Feast”

### **DATE - Timescapes**

Slovenia Tomaž Šalamun – “Lacquer”  
Prežihov Voranc – “The Self-Sown”  
Hungary Zsuzsa Beney – from *On Two Banks*  
István Vas – “Dialogue between Strangers”  
László Bruszt – “Workers, Managers and State Bureaucrats and the Economic Transformation in Hungary”  
Poland Czeslaw Milosz – “Window”  
Slovak Republic Daniel Simko – “The Arrival”  
Stanislava Chrobáková – “Autumn Motif”

### **Week 7**

#### **DATE - Rivers**

Czech Republic Ota Pavel – Selections from his book *The Golden Eels*  
Ivan Vyskočil – “Jacob’s Well”  
Vladislav Vančura – “All’s Well that Ends Well”  
Zdeněk Kriebel – “There, At Our Place”  
Slovenia Meta Kušar “3.”  
Dušan Čater – “Our Things”  
Hungary Péter Esterházy – “Down the Danube”  
Szabolcs Várady – “Chairs above the Danube”  
Poland Tadeusz Rozewicz – “In the Middle of Life”  
Czeslaw Milosz – “Dedication”  
Czeslaw Milosz – “Forget”  
Slovak Republic Daniel Simko – “Still Life”  
Věra Prokešová – “Cut”

### **Week 9–**

#### **DATE – Snow, Frost and Frozen People**

Slovenia	Meta Kušar – “6.” Tomaž Šalamun – “Jonah,” “To Metka”
Hungary	László Nagy – “Squared by Walls” István Baka – “Passing Through” Károly Bari – “Winter Diary” Flóra Imre – “Snow Covers the Garden” András Gerevich – “Seasons”
Poland	Michał Głowiński – “A Footbridge Over Time”
Czech Republic	Vladimír Holan – “Snow” Karel Čapek – “Footprints” Karel Čapek – “Footprint”
Slovak Republic	Daniël Šimko – “January” Ivan Štrpka – “A Second”

### **DATE – To Think or Not to Think**

Slovak Republic	Milan Šimečka – “On Uncertain Reality” Karol Chmel – “Skepticism”
Czech Republic	Václav Havel – “Family Singsong”
Hungary	Gábor Górgy – excerpt from “Interview” Péter Kántor – “On Truth” György Petri – “Credit Card” “Slovakia and Hungary: Trouble in Felvidek”
Poland	Czesław Miłosz – “Incantation,” “A Poem for the End of the Century”

### **DATE - Review Week**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE DATE by pm by email**

## POTENTIAL SUPPLEMENTARY SECONDARY LITERATURE (to be modified as needed)

### Central Europe

Dimitrijević, Anna. "European Identity: The Gaul and the Janus." *Europa*, Michaelmas 2001, pp. 14-15.

Foa, Roberto. "European Identity?", *Europa*, Michaelmas 2001, p. 12.

Fredriksson, Carl Henrik. "Does Central Europe Still Exist?" In: *Kwartalnik Res Publica Nowa*. Warszawa: Res Publica Nowa, ca. 2011, p. 6.

Kusý, Miroslav. We Central East Europeans. In: Markweta Goetz-Stankiewicz, *Good-bye, Samizdat*. Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 1992, pp. 160-165.

Rupnik, Jacques. "Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?" in *Daedalus*. Vol. 119, No. 1, Winter, 1990, pp. 249-278.

### Czech Republic / Slovakia

Morand, Patricia. "TCHECOSLOVAQUIE": Enquête sur une révolution baroque." *Le Temps stratégique*, no. 41, Septembre 1991, pp. 14-37.

Reiss, Michael. "A Tale of Two Cities", *Europa*, Trinity 2001, pp. 22-23.

### Hungary

Dimitrijević, Anna. "Has Hungry Hit the Jackpot?", *Europa*, Trinity 2001, pp. 7-8.

Zombory, Máté. "The Cartography of National Rites." In: *Kwartalnik Res Publica Nowa*. Warszawa: Res Publica Nowa, ca. 2011, pp. 21-33.

### Poland

Przybylski, Wojciech. "The Whereabouts of the Imprisoned Polish Memory." In: *Kwartalnik Res Publica Nowa*. Warszawa: Res Publica Nowa, ca. 2011, pp. 17-20.

### Slovenia

Debeljak, Aleš. "Reconstructing Europeanism?" In: *The Hidden Handshake: National Identity and Europe in the Post-Communist World*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, pp. 98-ca. 100.