

## **Application to the international PhD candidate conference *Crisis and culture***

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Section: Literary history

Language of the presentation: Hungarian

Title of the presentation: **The mental and cultural spaces of crisis**

### **Synopsis:**

The dissertation examines the prose work – born in the 1990s – of the Vojvodinian literary opus Erzsébet Juhász (1947–1998). In the 90s, the Vojvodinian minority literature narratives presented the scattered ego, which manifests itself behind masks, and role plays. Talking about the ego seemed naive, even when talking about Erzsébet Juhász. We can discover a conscious or unconscious hiding, or masking; partially because of the situation created by the multicultural space, and partially because of the existence of the so-called biographical taboo. At the same time, by including the alter ego, it is as if she destroyed this taboo, and flashed out existing personal or desired characteristics, which can be considered biographies. The inclusion, or re-inclusion of the biography into literary approaches cannot be considered a return to a previous state of literature, but a new kind of state, which can be a sign of normalization. For this topic, we have to discuss the definition of the relationship to reality. Considering that literature is fictionalized by default, referential reading is essentially impossible. So in the 90s, the readers did not dare to read texts referentially, even though they could have been read as such. Erzsébet Juhász does not consider the possibility of referential reading a taboo. She has event transmitting and informational passages, which are built organically into her works. This momentum becomes key in the regards of the return of moral-political approach in reading. According to the poststructuralist interpreters, the literary value does not depend on ideology. So works containing political and moral content were starting to go extinct from 90s canon. By reading Erzsébet Juhász's works, we can witness the destruction of this taboo, because in most of her works the hidden or expressed political and moral elements' explicit dominance can be observed. This phenomenon is most prominent in the novel *Határregény*. We can find concrete references to the

First and Second World Wars, the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, and the political situation of that time, etc.

During the examination of Erzsébet Juhász's opus, while also discussing the multiculturalism and the situation of the minorities, we can find a kind of reception, or interpretation, which can be approached from the former Monarchy. The Monarchy-literature was defined by the political situation at the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, and the resulting "life-feeling." During this period, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was in crisis, and in 1918 it fell apart. In her studies, Erzsébet Juhász dealt with the topic of Monarchy, and tried to prove that the afore mentioned literary Monarchy model does exist. The model makes the manifestation of similar consciousness factors of the peoples which are living - or lived - together possible. Not only did she notice the monarchic nature of the topics, but recognized a common "life-feeling" and worldview in certain works of Monarchy-literature, which cannot be made wholly independent from historical and socio-political factors. During the analysis of her works, the political-moral reading is necessary.

In her works, Erzsébet Juhász creates a closed world. It is closed in the sense that she presents individuals who, by their status as a minority, are limited not only by their own limits, but also by the constraints of the political situation – thus they are in crisis. The longing of individuals can be observed in a world outside of their own, maybe in the world of desires. But the individual of the life work often longs for the Central European dimensions as well – regardless whether we view it as a spiritual scene, or the "promised land." In the post-monarchic literature, this longing for Central Europe is the longing for the only possible and attainable criterion for freedom. For example, Angeline Nenadovits – appearing in the posthumous edition of *Határregény* – tries to alleviate the unbearable present situations by imagining herself in stories written at the turn of the century. The post-monarchic reading is closely related to the Assman cultural remembrance. In this way, the individuals and their environments were shaped by former cultural memories. So in this sense, the age of the Monarchy, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Central European events in general, all influenced the development of the individual identities found in the works of Juhász.