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# Third Literature Sleepover Held in Faculty of Education

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On the night of 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of November, for the third year in a row, a literature sleepover was held in the Faculty of Education of Charles University, where students and academics could join in and discuss literature, socialise, play musical instruments and sleep in the faculty building itself.

The event, running from 6pm Friday to 10am Saturday, attracted about 25 individuals, drawn from the various departments of the Faculty of Education. In a small, dimly lit room, the participants gathered in a circle, sitting on small carpets, with the floor littered with food, drink, and books, lots of books.

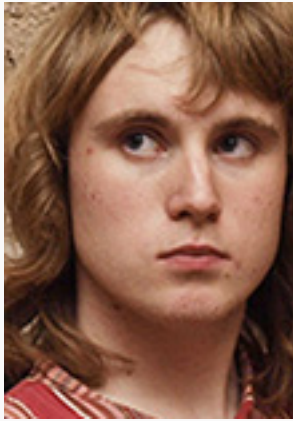
Two of the organisers of this event, lecturer Štěpánka Klumparová and student Lucie Michálková, both from the Faculty of Education of Charles University, tell me that the event is meant to enable students from different departments and different years in the faculty to come together and socialise. Lucie explains that students are put in 'learning circles', which are often changed, and this along with the fact that there is not a lot of time between lectures, and that students don't often go to the same classes as each other, means that students get very little opportunity to get to know each other, a contrast to High school, where you would get the same group of people studying with each other for four years. To Štěpánka there are not enough events like this organized for their students, and she stresses its importance in bringing students together. Though only a very small number of students come, both Lucie and Štěpánka tell me that this situation is ideal. Too many people would prevent everyone having the chance to join in and speak.

This year, the participants, rather than being asked to bring books they liked, were instead asked to bring books that they think are obscure, problematic, and/or they do not agree with or understand. Last year, according to Lucie and Štěpánka, the books that people liked were too familiar and this made the discussions uninteresting.

The result of this was that a variety of different and interesting titles were introduced: there were Czech books such as Viktor Fischl's *The Clowns in a Court*, about World War 2 era concentration camp prisoners forced to be clowns to entertain their captors, and Václav Renč's *Cinderella of Nazareth*, a book of poetry that was created by the author while interred in a Communist labour camp, but which he had to memorise completely, as he couldn't write it till he was released. Also present were books that are not so well known in the Czech Republic, though are well known in my own homeland of Britain: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (translated in Czech as *The End of Civilisation*), P.D James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* (a murder mystery *Pride and Prejudice* spinoff), a compilation of Conrad James stories (including his ubiquitous masterpiece, *Heart of Darkness*), Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and my own contribution, *In a Glass Darkly* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu.

Everyone was asked to introduce their book; give a little background information on the author and title, and read one or two short extracts. Also, they were asked to write about their choice in a small book that's passed around, so that anyone interested can look up the titles and explore them themselves. I myself joined in, however in my case I had to have people translate for me, as the event (for the moment) is only done for Czech-speaking students. To further complicate the matter, I once ended up going too fast or too complex for one of my translators to decipher what I was saying! Nonetheless, I managed to speak at great length about *In a Glass Darkly*, a book not well known outside of Britain.

Clearly, the event is an unusual, but brilliant way of bringing people together, and enabling them to speak at length about literature that they feel passionate about, and to socialise amongst people that they otherwise would not have the opportunity to meet or know well. To Štěpánka, that's what makes this event so crucial. For her, different perspectives are important, and at this event, that's exactly what is expressed.



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