

New Theoretical Vistas in Comparative Literature

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In May 2009, the Institute of World Literature, together with the ICLA Research Committee on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, will be organizing an international conference: *"The New Imagined Communities": Identity Build up in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*. This event will be an opportunity to pay tribute to one of the most prominent Slovak comparatists, Dionýz Ďurišin, whose monumental life's work is associated with the Institute of World Literature.

Ďurišin's innovative approach to comparative literature won high acclaim both at home and abroad. In particular, his idea of interliterary communities attracted considerable attention in the international sphere. Ďurišin's theoretical thinking was rooted in historical poetics, an approach that has generally enjoyed great popularity amongst literary scholars in Slovakia. The evolution of Western comparative studies has been a turbulent one. The 'theory wars' that swept the academic world of the United Kingdom and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s had an impact on comparative literature as well, a discipline that was, in any case, already struggling with its own theoretical problems. By contrast, Slovak comparative studies developed independently of this turmoil. After 1989, Slovak literary studies have found themselves in a new situation. Slovak scholars now enjoy more academic freedom than before. They can learn from, and develop their ideas in engagement with, ideas circulating in the West, whilst also being in a position to submit their own tradition to critical appraisal.

The current issue of *World Literature Studies*, published on the occasion of the May conference, is an attempt to live up to the maxim that the thoughts of great thinkers should find an afterlife in the next generation, whether in the shape of correction or development. It gathers articles and book reviews that discuss questions relevant to the further development of theoretical thinking in the field of comparative literature in Slovakia. Prominent scholars of comparative literature on the international stage, like Marcel Cornis Pope and Monica Spiridon, have kindly agreed to contribute to the issue. Marián Gálik has written a short sketch of the international reception of Ďurišin's work. The editors also hope that the present issue provides the English-speaking academic world with information on the present state of the discipline, whether here in Slovakia, with the articles by Mária Bátorová, and Róbert Gáfrik, or in the Czech Republic, with the contribution of Ivo Pospíšil, the Czech Republic representing an academic community with which ties have not been severed, even a number of years since the political independence of both countries.