

EDITORIAL

The present monothematic issue of *World Literature Studies* entitled *Comparative literary studies as Cultural Criticism* is symbolically dedicated to the XXth congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA/AILC) which will be held between 18 and 24 July 2013 at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. The aim of the editors was to present the results, the state and the perspectives of Slovak and Czech comparative literary studies at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries. This intention was confronted with the new trends in comparative literary studies which geographically and disciplinary broadened the “cognitive” horizons of comparative literary studies, understood as a philological discipline. For this reason the editors, who addressed local as well as foreign scholars, chose from a large number of articles those which, by their topic or methodology, corresponded the best with the focus of the congress and the topic of the issue. The monothematic issue brings together seven articles and several reviews of new releases in comparative literary studies in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and abroad. The editors selected articles which are theoretically founded and methodologically conceived and do not only summarize but also implement an innovative and conclusive approach to defining the purpose of comparison and comparative literary studies.

The opening article by Monika Schmitz-Emans explores the notions of text and labyrinth from a comparative perspective. It goes back to a lecture she gave at the Institute of World Literature in Bratislava in March 2012. Miloš Zelenka examines the definition of Central Europe in literary studies and Charles Sabatos maps the multicultural terrain of Central Europe and argues that it offers an ideal context for comparative cultural criticism. Adam Kolaš's article brings interesting perspectives on the problem of globalization and glocalization. Andrei Terian presents a thought-provoking analysis of the topic of the “incomparable” in contemporary comparative literary studies. Róbert Gáfrik writes about the challenges of non-Western poetics to our understanding of world literature. Anton Pokrivčák's article is an essay on René Wellek's contribution to the theory of comparative literary studies and its relevance to the present state of the discipline.

The articles show that modern comparative literary studies profile as a universal and “alternative” theory of literature and at the same time they substitute the deconstruction of their distinctive identity with the stress on “comparison” as a specific way of reading and interpretation. “Comparison” is perceived as a pangrammatological base of all social and human sciences. The editors realize that the contemporary comparative literary studies are characterized by free critical reflection bound up with “comparison” (such as imagology, colonial and post-colonial studies, intercultural comparative studies, East-West studies, genre studies, feminist criticism, the theory of world literature, geopoetics, emigrantology, etc.) rather than by strict regulative ideas; they have become a re-interpretation of the contemporary labyrinth of literary studies and a means of communication among their detailed segments, which often function independently of each other. At the same time, comparative literary studies, commonly seen as a kind of dialogue leading to the understanding of both cultural identity and otherness, should remain literary studies that do not fear to enter in a dialogue with other humanities, and thus need to always reflect on the theoretical justification of their own existence.

The editors hope that the present issue of *World Literature Studies*, with its theoretical and methodological character, will be able to contribute to the wide multicultural discourse of the jubilee ICLA congress and, at the same time, that it will prove to be an attempt at a dialogue which will open new perspectives to Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies.

Róbert Gáfrik – Miloš Zelenka