

Interlitteraria – 19/1

*National Literatures and  
Comparative Literary Research*



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
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## *Introductory Note*

*National Literatures and Comparative Literary Research* was the title of the 10<sup>th</sup> international conference of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature. The conference was held in September 2013 in Tartu and brought together 32 speakers from ten countries. About half of the papers are published in this issue of *Interlitteraria*, with more to follow in the winter issue.

Over the past two decades, the biannual conferences of the EACL have become a venue for fruitful discussion for literary scholars focused on problematics reflected also by the latest title: the constant dialogue between national and supranational or international traditions, between different national traditions, and the essential importance of that dialogue for the very existence of these traditions. As Jüri Talvet points out in his opening article, the “self” is inseparably linked to the “other(s)”, and it is in search for their mutual respect and loving interaction that both literature and literary research find their purpose.

The following articles explore various ways in which comparative literary research can enrich our understanding of national culture and also broaden the meaning of it. Looking past national borders towards larger cultural areas connected by shared history can reveal both similarities between literatures and distinctively individual traits. Comparative criticism may help relativize interpretations and historiography that have narrowed the functions of a literature to a national cause, and show that images, forms, poetical devices and themes travel through texts regardless of linguistic and national borders.

After this first section concerning nations, territories and languages and containing articles by Santiago Pérez Isasi, Benedikts Kalnačs, Dorothea Scholl and Anneli Mihkelev, the issue continues with matters of the past and the future of literature. Aigi Heero, Asta Vaškeliene and Mari Tarvas study reading and writing practices in early modern Estonia and Lithuania. Questions about how to find new ways of meaningful reading, and how certain textual practices and canon building traditions influence young readers are then discussed by Indrė Žakevičienė, Scarlet P. W. Lee and Anna W. B. Tso, Ryszard Waksmund and Dorota Michulka.

The issue ends with a series of studies of individual works of literature in their national and international context by Maris Saagpakk, Maris Sõrmus, Kārlis Vērdiņš and Jānis Ozoliņš, Anneli Kõvamees, followed by two case studies of reception of translated literature by Lauri Pilter and Chen Dahong.

The variety of perspectives, literary traditions and works represented in this issue makes it more than a collection of already completed studies. It is a valuable

tool for future comparative work, enabling scholars from different countries, with different linguistic and academic background to share knowledge about literary works and phenomena that are not universally accessible. The EACL conferences and *Interlitteraria* bring together researchers who not only have a number of languages in common, but an even greater number of languages and literatures to bring into this shared space, making for an increasingly diverse field of study and constantly renewed perspectives in comparative research.

*Interlitteraria* and the EACL are grateful for the collegiality and friendship that always accompanies this joint effort at our conferences, just as it did during the preparation of this issue.

Katre Talviste  
*Managing Editor*