
Comparative literature in the 20th century and Anton Ocvirk

Summary

IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, COMPARATIVE literature has spread even to those parts of the world that it had not reached before and has thus become truly global at least from the external perspective. However, at the same time it has faced a crisis in its traditional centers across Europe and North America, which has shaken its conceptual premises, theoretical foundations, and methodological structure, affected its inclusion in university and scholarly institutions, and jeopardized its social status. Comparative literature itself is no exception here because the situation described above was characteristic of all of literary studies, the humanities, the social sciences, philosophy, and the general theory of science, and was also connected with the changing nature of research areas and subjects. The discipline responded to this fundamental change brought about by the postmodern age through increased self-awareness and a true flourishing of relevant production directed towards fundamental reflections on oneself, the current situation, its genesis, and possible future paths. The principles and viewpoints, empirical findings, value assessments, and development proposals worked out at numerous meetings and in a series of publications are of course different, caught between opposite extremes, ranging from predictions of the discipline's imminent death to the anticipation of its renewal. If it was possible to have a premonition of some kind of catastrophe based on these diagnoses of revolutionary events, a gradual establishment of the feeling that the current crisis also conceals productive dimensions, which open up new developmental perspectives, has lately been frequently observed.

Slovenian comparatists have also participated in this line of thought. They may not have been the first to do it, and they may not have done it regularly and to a full extent, but they have done it sufficiently in order to observe, follow, and report on these developments – and they tend to become actively involved with them increasingly often. These efforts also included the symposium organized

in September 2007 by the ZRC SAZU (Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies in cooperation with the SAZU (Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) Section for Philological and Literary Studies, the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts, and the Slovenian Comparative Literature Association. Its direct impetus was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Anton Ocvirk (1907–1980), the founder of Slovenian comparative literature as an independent scholarly discipline.

The literary historian, comparatist, theoretician, critic, and editor Anton Ocvirk was a student of Slavic studies and comparative literature in Ljubljana; he did additional study in Paris and in London. He obtained a university faculty rank with his book *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* (Theory of the Comparative Literary History, Ljubljana, 1936), which was one of the rare early, detailed, and systematic surveys of this field. From 1937 until his retirement in 1974, he taught at the University of Ljubljana. Thanks to Ocvirk's efforts, the study of comparative literature, which had been offered in Ljubljana since 1925/26, developed into an independent program with its own department. Successive groups of comparatists received their educations in this department and later established themselves at the university through scholarly research, in scholarly and culturally-oriented publications, on the editorial boards of publishing houses, and through newspapers, radio, and television. In addition to his lectures, Ocvirk played an important role in organizing scholarly research and publishing. From 1948 to 1963 he was editor-in-chief of the main Slovenian philological journal, *Slavistična revija*. From 1965 until his death, he was head of the Institute of Literary Studies at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In this capacity he edited and published a collection of studies on literary theory titled *Literarni leksikon* (Literary Lexicon), which was published until 2001. Two of his major projects were intended for the general public. In 1946, he founded a series of critical editions titled *Zbrana dela slovenskih pesnikov in pisateljev* (Collected Works of Slovenian Poets and Writers), serving as chief editor until his death. The series is still being published today. From 1964 to 1976 he edited a collection of Slovenian translations from world literature titled *Sto romanov* (One Hundred Novels). This collection – by its selection of authors and works, and the thorough companion studies primarily written by a variety of comparatists – significantly contributed to the broadening of literary horizons in Slovenia.

The significant influence of the French School of comparative literature, especially that of Paul Hazard, shaped Ocvirk in the 1930s. Because the Slovenian cul-

tural area, at the crossroads of the Germanic, Romance, and Slavic worlds, opens up in all directions, Ocvirk also dealt with the main currents of literary studies that were important at the time – German intellectual history (*Geistesgeschichte*), Marxist literary studies, Russian formalism, Romance stylistics, the beginnings of immanent interpretation – as well as with all previous works of Slovenian and Slavic literary and cultural history. In the process, he developed a unique variety of comparative literature that studies numerous literary phenomena from bilateral contacts to international processes: schools, movements, trends, and periods. He systematically included the literature of smaller nations in the notion of European and world literature. In practice, his studies always touched on the issue of Slovenian literature in a comparative context. From the methodological point of view, what is typical of Ocvirk's idea of comparative literary studies is that he consistently dealt with his subject from a historical and developmental perspective, and tried to confirm his findings with documented facts. At the same time, he leaned on views of literary theory that concentrically orient themselves from the largest circle, the period, through the personality of the author towards the center – the literary work – which is essentially defined by its esthetic function.

In the period following Ocvirk, Slovenian comparative literature has kept abreast with the most recent developments in contemporary European and American literary studies on a regular basis, and in some areas has contributed its own independent share to them. In this, it has relied upon Ocvirk and adopted many development incentives, but due to its needs for natural development it has also drifted away from Ocvirk. This situation enables and demands a thorough analysis and evaluation of Ocvirk's canonical works in the discipline.

A further goal of the symposium that took place on the anniversary of Anton Ocvirk's birth was to raise some basic questions about the present state, current issues, and developmental perspectives of comparative literature both in the international academic environment and in Slovenia. In addition to several Slovenian presenters, these issues were primarily addressed by presenters from abroad, among whom were several prominent and leading representatives of this discipline active on the international academic scene.

The success of this symposium provided encouragement for this work to continue. In the following months, the majority of presenters analyzed their viewpoints and findings, which had only been outlined in some papers, further and in greater detail, and buttressed them with additional arguments. The results of

this work are presented in this thematic volume.¹ The papers included focus on two central themes. The first relates to Anton Ocvirk's academic works and public activity, his place within Slovenian comparative literature, and selected European contexts. The second theme involves a variety of thematic complexes: the relationship between comparative literature and related or competing methods, schools, and disciplines; the conceptual and subject-specific definition of world literature, and seeking the most appropriate procedures for treating it; characteristics of certain "small" comparative literature schools comparable to the Slovenian school; and epistemological and methodological issues of literary history. The broadest common framework includes the awareness of the contemporary plural or crisis state of comparative literature, the promotion of its independence in the future, and efforts to renovate it on the basis of critical self-reflection.

The first part, devoted to Ocvirk's work in comparative literature, literary theory, criticism, and editing, begins with a paper by Janko Kos ("Philosophical, National, and Ideological Grounds of Slovenian Comparative Literature"). Kos examines the methods, world views, and ideologies implied in the founding of Slovenian comparative literature. Anton Ocvirk proceeded from the philosophical and scholarly postulates of positivism and understood scholarship in the sense of "historical empiricism;" he opposed neo-idealism, phenomenology, and immanent interpretation, claiming that these methods were abstract, ahistoric, and subjective, and that they relied upon other "positivist" disciplines (e.g., linguistics, psychology, and so on). However, at the same time he accepted experiential comprehension of literary works as "esthetic organisms" from the "philosophy of life" (Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dilthey). Therefore, he was skeptical towards dogmatic positivism and open to the ideas of scientific conventionalism and fictionalism (Vaihinger). The philosophical heteronomy of Ocvirk's concept enabled Slovenian comparative literature to gradually focus on methodological pluralism and open itself to various approaches, from intellectual history, phenomenology, and information esthetics to structuralism, new historicism, and deconstruction. It complemented the concept of strict scholarship with ideas from literary and general philosophical hermeneutics.

According to Kos, the answer to the question of national foundations of Slovenian comparative studies is hidden in its relationship to the models of European

¹ The English and French originals of six papers (by Bessière, Biti, Hajdu, Milutinović, Spiridon, and Tihanov) were published as part of the thematic unit "Perspektive primerjalne književnosti" (Perspectives in Comparative Literature) in the journal *Primerjalna književnost* 31.1 (2008): 1–72.

and world comparative literature. The fact that Ocvirk followed the French school in the interwar period was a symptom of a shift from the literary and scholarly traditions of Central Europe to the scholarly culture of the West. This brought him into conflict with other Slovenian studies experts with different orientations, who thought his perspective posed a danger to Slovenian national identity. Despite his “cosmopolitan” orientation, Ocvirk designed Slovenian comparative studies based on the connection of Slovenian literary tradition with the European context by placing Slovenian literature at the center of comparative studies. This orientation remained typical of Slovenian comparative studies even after Ocvirk, when the interests of younger researchers spread beyond the French models to more recent German, Russian, and American schools of literary studies and their methodologies and ideas.

Considering the ideological level, Kos raises the question of which “ideology” – defined by Parsons as a system of historically defined viewpoints, values, and norms – directed Ocvirk’s evaluation, selection, and codification of literary phenomena; another related question arises regarding what the relationship to evaluation in contemporary Slovenian comparative literature may be. Ocvirk viewed evaluation as a legitimate part of literary studies; not as something a priori, absolute, and ahistoric, but as something that is historically dependent, changeable, and relative. However, in his concrete explanations of literary works he also evaluated the subjective and experiential – that is, non-scholarly elements. This possibility seems to be in opposition to Max Weber’s demand that science be free from all value judgments. Ocvirk did not work on resolving this aporia. He would have probably agreed with the view that literary studies do not evaluate literary works directly, but receive them pre-evaluated through the prior experience of readers, literary critics, and essayists, and then explain them using historical and theoretical concepts, theories, and models. However, this is an issue for all of the disciplines in the humanities and is part of the philosophy of science (*Wissenschaftstheorie*), which Ocvirk did not explicitly address.

Closely connected to his historicist comparative methods and ideas is Ocvirk’s grounding of literary theory. Darko Dolinar focuses on “Anton Ocvirk’s Conception of the Literary Work.” Dolinar stresses that Ocvirk was actively engaged in the development processes that transformed the theoretical and methodological structure of Slovenian literary studies in the mid-20th century; this process was similar to those within the broader European and American context, despite being on a smaller scale. In addition to literary periods and poetic or creative personali-

ties, Ocvirk considered the work of literature itself to be one of the main subjects or research areas in literary studies. He developed a general model of the work of literature in his theoretical essays; his fundamental conceptualization is also evident in his studies of individual literary texts. Ocvirk's theoretical discourse proceeded from three groups of views: biological and psychological comprehension, structuralist comprehension, and comprehension of a literary work as a spiritual organism. Through critical confrontation, he established what their conceptual bases were and which elements might still be acceptable and which had to be rejected. He thus gradually developed his conceptualization, whose mature phase may be summarized in the following manner: a literary work is an esthetic organism, a specific union of idea, material, and form, expressed through lexical material; this complex structure is created in the process of genesis, in which the creative personality unconsciously and consciously shapes conceptual, material, and formal elements from his or her own experience and various external materials, and combines them into a whole that is no longer an expression of his or her experience nor a reflection of the real world, but a new, artistic reality. This new structure, composed of linguistic expressive elements, is defined by a synthesis of its various functions, among which the esthetic function predominates; therefore, the most appropriate way to study the most important characteristics of a literary work is to synthesize its functions.

Ocvirk's theoretical model as described by Dolinar features several important characteristics. By acknowledging the importance of genesis for establishing the work's characteristics and the legitimacy of genetic research, it connects the literary work to the author and through the author to the literary period – that is, to multi-dimensional historical processes. However, at the same time this model establishes the relative autonomy of literary art based on its esthetic function, and connects it with the possibility of studying it from various angles. Although often implicit and not fully developed in its early stage, this conceptualization guided Ocvirk in his many years of studying the genesis of literary works, their style and linguistic expressive means, (especially verse) form (including the theory and history of verse), the compositions and principles of literary genres, as well as his treatment of individual great works of European novel writing. An analysis of a typical example (his study of Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*) shows that its basic characteristics correspond to the theoretical model described above. The example deviates from the model only in one important aspect: it adds a description of the reception processes to the genetic and representational dimension of the literary work, which approaches the related issue of a double (historical or temporal, and extra-historical or extra-temporal) quality and value.

Ocvirk's complex conceptualization of the literary work of course has its own internal conflicts, and from the perspective of later development in the discipline it is easy to see its limitations. However, these reservations fade away if one takes into account the period and circumstances that shaped Ocvirk's personality and work. The union of his fundamental views and the concrete research practice described here enabled the literary theory as nurtured by Ocvirk to take its place side by side with literary history as an equal component of complex literary studies; until then, it had been regarded only as a subordinate or auxiliary discipline. In addition to founding comparative literature, elevating literary theory to this status is, according to Dolinar, Ocvirk's second contribution to the development and modernization of Slovenian literary studies.

The issue of the ideological grounds of comparative literature, which was tackled in Kos's paper, is central to Marko Juvan's "Ideologies of Comparative Literature: Metropolitan and Peripheral Perspectives." Juvan maintains that ideologies motivate, regulate, and assign meaning to a particular signifying practice, thus providing it with social power. They give perspective to and cognitively help organize knowledge through its articulation and/or representation in texts (van Dijk). Scholarly discourse that is (re)produced by competing agents, communities, and institutions within the discipline is in permanent need of wider social recognition; it has to legitimize itself not only self-referentially, through immanent discursive rules and truth criteria, but also by intertextually adopting and transforming ideologemes that are disseminated in public space. Since the 19th century, the discourse of national literary histories (including Slovenian) has been rooted in the transnational ideology of European cultural nationalism (Leerssen), which remained inscribed in the generic memory of historical texts until recently, although mainly in the reduced form of "methodological nationalism" (Beck). In contrast, comparative literature – both methodologically, by defining the subject field (world literature or international literary relations) and research procedures (relational interpretation of cultural phenomena), as well as explicitly, by referring to universal humanistic ideas – has stood for transcending the narrowness of the "nationalized" perspective. The ideology of comparative literature in Slovenia and elsewhere thus seems to be cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a belief that "in their essence" people are equal, regardless of affiliations to various states, languages, religions, classes, or cultures. Since the 18th century, cosmopolitanism has informed the lifestyles of urban intellectual elites as well as conceptually inspired ethics and international law, economic theories of the free market, political science, and the humanities, especially comparative literature. Comparative literature

outlined its research horizon in the spirit of Goethe's, Marx's, and Engels' ideas of "world literature," which was expected to transcend the emerging national literary traditions at that time through growing cultural exchange (e.g., translations and foreign book reviews). However, even Goethe's concept of "world literature" is not merely cosmopolitan, but also Eurocentric and nationalist, aiming at the promotion of German literature, which faced strong international competitors. Both cultural nationalism and cosmopolitanism were inseparable parts of the same historical process and conditioned one another. Goethe's economic metaphors draw attention to the analogy between the expansion of the capitalist economy into the "world system" (Wallerstein) and the gradual formation of a "world republic of letters" (Casanova) as a space of diffusion and circulation of literary texts that exceeded the linguistic boundaries of their literary fields (Damrosch), or as an inter-literary "polysystem" (Even-Zohar, Āurišin) that, similar to the world economy, is unequally structured – that is, it consists of influential productive centers and primarily receptive peripheries (Moretti).

Juvan shows that many comparatists in Slovenia and elsewhere incorporated their scholarly work into hidden nationalist agendas: by making international comparisons, they sought arguments for the cultural and political prestige of their own nation or country. Juvan's comparison between two early introductions to comparative literature, one from a cultural metropolis (Paul Van Tieghem, *La Littérature comparée* [Comparative Literature], 1931) and the other from a peripheral zone (Anton Ocvirk, *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* [Theory of Comparative Literary History], 1936) shows that the vectors and profiles of nationalism among comparatists from the central or "great" (G) world literatures differ from those coming from (semi-)peripheral or "small" (S) literatures. Through their own works, or by training or influencing S-comparatists, the G-comparatists consolidated the international dominance of their native literatures (by recording the planetary influences of their own writers, celebrating their culture's openness to imports, and comparing only "great" literatures of Western metropolises). The comparative literatures on the European peripheries, on the other hand, established the notion that even S-literatures are "perfect" in terms of repertoire and that they belong to a strong and prominent cultural area, such as "Europe" or "Western Civilization." However, by privileging comparisons with the great, the discipline strengthened the power of the metropolis and transferred its imperial perspective to the home environment, from which the center is seen as the prime meridian for defining literary modernity and innovation, whereas the periphery is condemned to backwardness and imitation (cf. Casanova). Based on this, inferiority complexes and

consolation fiction arose in public discourse, as well as forms of resistance – that is, critical rejection of cultural imperialist logic and affirmation of the creative potentials of marginal and border zones (e.g., through Ocvirk’s critique of Western-centered notions, his revisions of the term “influence,” or stressing the productivity of S-literatures and peripheral zones).

Juvan reminds us that the oscillation between the ideologemes of cosmopolitanism and cultural or methodological nationalism is still evident in comparative methodology. The basic categorical unit that is the subject of comparison is the ideological construct of “national literature” (Boldrini, Hutcheon), and not region, town, and so on; the cosmopolitan notion of “world literature” also originally consists of “nations.” Recently, both traditional ideologies of comparative studies have been superseded by a new system of legitimizing scholarly discourse – that is, the ideology of multi- and transculturalism. Especially in Western urban centers, this has been formed as a reflex of globalization. Within the post-national paradigm, the persuasiveness of Herder’s link of nation, language, territory, and literature has been shaken, and with it also the identity model presupposed by national and comparative literary histories. Yet nationalism has received new impetus in the humanities of ethnicities that are only starting to become established internationally. On the other hand, in its changed forms, cosmopolitanism is attracting attention as an alternative to multicultural relativism and Western hegemony; through it, the responsibility for the destiny of the planet and mankind is being articulated (Appiah, Spivak).

Miloš Zelenka, in his “On the Theoretical Concept of General Literature in the Interwar Period (Frank Wollman and Anton Ocvirk, and their Reflections on Paul Van Tieghem),” also comparatively contextualizes Ocvirk’s foundations of Slovenian comparative literature. He does this by placing Ocvirk’s ideas in a specific historical scene that makes it clear how Western scholarly influences have been reworked by scholars from the Slavic and Central European “in-between periphery.” He discusses similarities and differences in the reception of Paul Van Tieghem’s work *La littérature comparée* (Comparative Literature, 1931) within the Slavic context in the interwar period, and especially in the theoretical works *K metodologiji srovnávací slovesnosti slovanské* (On the Methodology of Comparative Slavic Literature, 1936) by Frank Wollman and *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* ([Theory of Comparative literary History], 1936) by Ocvirk. Both scholars were inspired, positively and negatively, by the concept of general literature, conceptualized as a literary structure of a specific international society defined in a concrete cultural and historical environment.

Despite their age difference, Wollman (1888–1969) and Ocvirk (1907–1980) ranked among the founding authorities in Slavic comparative literary studies in the first half of the 20th century. With their theoretical and literary historical practice within their national contexts, they both contributed to establishing comparative literature as an autonomous discipline, in which they clearly defined its affiliations with literary history and theory. They had similar viewpoints in terms of methodology: in their works they connected the findings of the older positivist philological and cultural-historical school with the impulses of new scholarly isms. Wollman thus founded his work on phenomenology and especially the structural and functionalist views of the Prague linguistic circle, of which he was a member. On the other hand, Ocvirk was inspired by Russian formalism and modern directions in intellectual history. Within the Slavic context, it was Wollman and Ocvirk that responded to Van Tieghem's request to work out a new type of literary history synthesis that would be the precondition for a general European literary history in Central and Eastern Europe. They both carefully took into account the semantic double layer and instructions of Van Tieghem's concept: to seek already existing supranational structures instead of the phenomenon of world literature, and to follow and interpret their communication of themes, topics, forms, genres, ideas, and so on.

Despite common points of departure, there are fundamental differences between Wollman's and Ocvirk's reception of Van Tieghem's concept of general literature. Ocvirk's publication serves as a traditional systematic manual providing theoretical basics for an in-depth understanding of Slovenian literature within European literature, whereas the polemic character of Wollman's essay originated in the initiatives of the Prague linguistic circle, which in 1934, at the Second Congress of Slavists in Warsaw, strongly protested against the doubt about the existence of a community of Slavic literatures on the part of the German Slavic experts (Konrad Bittner, Josef Pfitzner, and others). Ocvirk's monograph provides the main syntheses of Slavic literatures, from Šafařík all the way to Wollman's book *Slovesnost Slovanů* (Slavic Literature, 1928), but it does not devote any attention to the arguments about the subject of Slavic philology, the cultural schism, or the common heritage of Slavic cultures. Ocvirk is inspired by Van Tieghem's book, the core of which can be found in its second part, *Méthodes et résultats de la littérature comparée* (The Methodology and Findings of Literary Comparative Studies), not only in the concept, but also the compositional division: more than half of Ocvirk's work is comprised of "Metodologija" (Methodology), which is divided into "Primerjalni metodološki problemi" (Comparative Methodological Issues) and "Mednarodni

literarni odnosi in vplivi” (International Literary Relations and Influences). The key part of Wollman’s book is the fourth (and final) chapter titled “Metodologické závěry literárněvědné” (Methodological Conclusions in Literary Studies), in which he uses Van Tieghem’s conception of general literature as a proof for the historical argumentation of inter-Slavic literary tradition as an organic system of Slavic literature. It is surprising that Ocvirk accepts Van Tieghem’s differentiation of general and comparative literature only with reserve, and that he considers the comparative syntheses of great literary entireties defined according to an ethnic key (linguistic or geographical) to be premature. According to Wollman, the main point of the existence of general literature in the spirit of structural esthetics originates in the comparison of literary forms and structures, which enter world literature individually with their own genetic relationships, and not as a whole. According to Ocvirk, the true core of comparative literary studies is represented by analytical works in international literary history, which mostly focus on the binary relationships between two literary phenomena. Wollman, who favors synthetic studies, focuses on the formation of international literary systems; especially general Slavic literature as part of world literature. The basic difference can be found in the understanding of methodological issues of comparative literary studies: Ocvirk emphasizes the issues of mutual relationships and influences, the expansion of which he divided in detail into “linear” and “concentric.” In contrast, Wollman moves from genetic and contact research to an emphasis on typology. His concept of eidology, which he defined at the end of the 1920s, represented a definition of the studies of literary types and genres according to genetic influences and, primarily, typological analogies.

In conclusion, Zelenka ascertains that both scholars accepted Van Tieghem’s concept of comparative literary studies very differently. Despite his direct contact with the French comparatist movement and strong formal attachment to his text, Ocvirk understands the phenomenon of general literature as very abstract; he is more inspired by individual elements (the theory of influences, the issue of the intermediary, studying motifs, etc.) and thus remains a literary theoretician and an internationally well-versed expert in Slovenian studies. As an expert in Slavic studies, Wollman does not favor Czech literature in his research; on the basis of Van Tieghem’s understanding of general literature, he seeks to form his own theory of Slavic inter-literary character, which enables him to form a structural model of Slavic literatures based on the eidological (i.e., morphological) principle.

Whereas Zelenka considers the diffusion and transformation of Van Tieghem’s concepts in the work of two prominent Slavic comparatists from Central Europe,

Tone Smolej, in his “Lucien Tesnière and Slovenian Comparative Literature,” reports on other details about French–Slovenian comparatist and literary relations in the 1920s and 1930s. He discusses the work of Lucien Tesnière (1893–1954), now generally known as a linguist (e.g., *Éléments de syntaxe structurale*, [Elements of Structural Syntax], 1959) and a specialist in Slavic studies. During spring semester of 1921, Tesnière started working as a French teacher at the newly established University of Ljubljana, where he remained for two years. In his doctoral dissertation *Les formes du duel en slovène* (Dual Forms in Slovenian) he mainly studied the dual in various Slovenian dialects, but he is also important as a mediator of French literature and culture. This paper focuses on the comparatist chapters in his book *Oton Župančič: Poète slovène – L’homme et l’oeuvre* (Oton Župančič: A Slovenian Poet – The Man and His Works, 1931), which contains detailed analyses of foreign influences on the Slovenian poet. As a trained specialist in German studies, Tesnière originally drew attention to the influences of Richard Dehmel, but also thoroughly documented the parallels between Župančič and French symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine. The last part of the paper discusses Tesnière’s contacts with Anton Ocvirk, who wrote an extensive report on Tesnière’s monograph as a graduate student in France. In addition, this paper explains certain less-known circumstances that led to the publication of Tesnière’s review of Ocvirk’s first book *Razgovori* (Discussions, 1933) in *Revue de littérature comparée*. *Razgovori* contain extensive interviews with André Gide, Lev Šestov, Georges Duhamel, Nikolai Berdyaev, André Maurois, Aleksey Remizov, and Paul Hazard.

The historical insights into the ideological, methodological, and trans- or international contexts of Ocvirk’s development of comparative literature and literary theory are rounded off by Jola Škulj, who highlights their topical relevance (“Founding Concepts in Slovenian Comparative Literature and Current Comparative Initiatives”). She starts with the observation that, in his seminal work *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* (1936), Ocvirk thoroughly outlined how to understand literature and how to approach literary facts in the web of their cultural reality, in the network of unending contacts and factual relations of literary texts. He sought to indicate the methodological principles of comparative studies of literature, to identify its issues, and to state the proper reason for its further scholarly development. Rereading Ocvirk’s early book seventy years after its original publication shows that his set of guidelines remains quite relevant in its insights, even though the discipline of comparative literature underwent constant changes and further development throughout the world as well as at the University of Ljubljana. Ocvirk’s cosmopolitan mind and the well-grounded knowledge behind his

comprehensive discussion of the discipline reveal a systematic framework of methodological principles that remains refreshing even today in view of current comparative ideas (cf. Bakhtinian dialogism and Lotman's idea of the semiosphere). Ocvirk's solid starting point of comparative research aimed at minute inquiry into historical records of literary contacts and at analyses of factual traces found in writing materials. He advocated the comparative method for providing true historical knowledge of literatures: to scrutinize and map out the paths of creative esthetic and artistic impetuses behind their heterological manifestations in heterolingual cultural situations, and to make available pertinent details about evolutionary trends, tangible evidence of transnational literary influences, the effects of impelling forces behind literary changes, and the stimulating or inhibitory impacts of reading transactions, translated books, and dramatic works. In his view, comparative studies enable detailed and careful examination, close scrutiny of the factual foundations of literatures, and a critical perspective on their validity and development. Ocvirk was well aware of the neglected role of minor literatures and ignorance with respect to authors writing in lesser-known languages. Understanding literature and its inherent qualities instituted in a complex set of links with other literatures, he promoted ideas of comparative literary study as an approach to recognizing in it an ongoing double channel for information – the two-way agency of national and transnational transmission of artistic ideas, materials, and strategies. As a genuine comparatist, Ocvirk was acutely aware of asymmetries in disseminating artistic ideas and hence also of the symmetries lacking in the histories of European literatures. Such an observation was rather advanced due to his de-centered view of literary reality. In fact, it strongly delineates Ocvirk's own comparatist arguments for a true historical approach and synthesis.

By writing his well-informed volume and setting up the theoretical aspects of comparative literary history, Ocvirk reinforced the institutional framework of comparative literary studies in Slovenia, which can be traced to before the mid-1930s. The objectives for launching responsive comparative insight into literature in an area that had long been immersed in a multilingual past were obvious and well motivated. The ambitious and well-founded initial concepts in Ocvirk's comparative studies represented a challenge for the following generation of Slovenian comparatists to supplement and advance methodological issues, and to proceed by addressing viewpoints on literature as the art essential for its existence. Škulj's article discusses the founding schemes and their reinterpretation in Slovenian comparative studies, and addresses the available alternatives in actual comparatist initiatives.

The set of papers dealing with Ocvirk's work as university teacher, editor, and critic, as well as with certain aspects of his comparative practice, begins with the chapter on "Oriental Literatures in Ocvirk's World Literature Studies Program." Here, Vlasta Pacheiner-Klander states that only one printed source informs us about the inclusion of Oriental literatures in Ocvirk's world literature study program: Ocvirk's 1950 course outline for the study of world literature and literary theory. However, the extent and manner of treating this area can be gleaned from Ocvirk's handwritten lecture notes, preserved in the papers from his estate. In lectures that he repeated twice, he presented nine of the most important Oriental literatures (due to their lack of connection, each of them as a separate unit). He did not adhere to a chronological principle because of the specifics of the topic, primarily following a geographical perspective instead. His survey began with extremely ancient Chinese literature and continued with more recent Japanese literature. He focused the greatest attention by far on Indian literature, followed by Persian, then Arabic, and a more cursory overview of Turkish literature. He concluded by returning to ancient literatures: Babylonian-Assyrian, Egyptian, and Hebrew. He mentioned minor and less independent literatures only in connection with major ones as their areas of influence.

Although Ocvirk knew that he was not an expert in Oriental literatures, he decided to include coverage of non-European literatures in comparative literary history on two grounds, as can be seen from his lecture notes. On the one hand, he thought that a student of world literature should become acquainted with Oriental literary works because of their artistic value; on the other hand, he emphasized especially those parts of Oriental literatures that had influenced the development of European literature and thought. This double argumentation of the significance of Oriental literatures can already be understood from Ocvirk's book *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* of 1936. There he justified the global, and not only the European perspective, of literary studies. He received the confirmation of this view in Goethe, but as a scholar he perceived the literary-historical problematicity of the term "world literature." Thus he drew attention to certain unresolved issues and pleaded for a new synthesis.

Unlike Paul Van Tieghem, Ocvirk included Oriental themes in his coverage of mythology, and non-European religions in his coverage of religious themes. There are more than twenty individual mentions of non-European literatures in various places throughout the book. The impetus for such a perspective on Oriental literatures could have come from Paul Hazard, whose lectures Ocvirk

attended in Paris, and to whom he refers in his handwritten lecture notes on Oriental literatures.

Although neither Slovenian comparative studies nor Slovenian studies of non-European literatures have been able to participate in such demanding tasks proposed by Ocvirk in his book, thanks to his endeavors smaller but very concrete goals have been achieved. Ocvirk gave the initiative for research on Oriental themes in two series under his editorship. For the collection *Sto romanov* (One Hundred Novels), in which each volume contained a detailed analysis of the chosen novel, he selected one Bengali and one Japanese novel. For the series *Literarni leksikon* (Literary Lexicon), planned by him and published by the ZRC SAZU Institute for Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies, he engaged Pacheiner-Klander to write the volume *Staroindijska poetika* (Ancient Indian Poetics), later followed by the volume *Staroindijske verzne oblike* (Ancient Indian Verse Forms). It was at Ocvirk's suggestion that she had gone to India to study Sanskrit and Indian culture. The coverage of old Oriental literatures has remained part of the courses in the Department of Comparative Literature at the university. It was first headed by Dušan Pirjevec, and after him by Janko Kos and other of Ocvirk's successors. With a number of texts, these literatures also made their way into secondary school readers under the editorship of Ocvirk's disciples and their followers.

Majda Stanovnik presents another important initiative stemming from Ocvirk's comparativism. In her paper "Anton Ocvirk's Concept of Comparative Literature and the Collection *Sto romanov*," she states that the collection *Sto romanov* (One Hundred Novels, 1964–1976) was not designed as a publication intended for scholarship and study, but as interesting reading material for avid readers among the general public. Cene Vipotnik, the editor-in-chief at the Cankarjeva založba publishing house, hired the comparative/world literature and literary theory professor Anton Ocvirk to head this project because his expertise and reputation guaranteed a high-quality, attractive collection. Ocvirk took over the editorship in addition to performing his regular work and simultaneous editorship of the critical edition of *Zbrana dela slovenskih pesnikov in pisateljev* (Collected Works of Slovenian Poets and Writers). He also demonstrated his comparative literature principle in designing the *Sto romanov* collection: he introduced a historical and developmental perspective on international literary events, impartial observation of various styles and esthetic directions in various periods, and a non-hierarchical comprehension of relationships between the literatures of large and small nations regardless of the size of their contributions to novel writing with international

impact. Especially important is the fact that he rejected the dichotomy between “national” and “world:” Ocvirk classified Slovenian literature among European and thus world literatures. He sharpened the specific features of this Slovenian collection of representative novels with demanding and completely original companion studies, which, in addition to Ocvirk himself, were mostly written by comparatists trained in his seminars.

The developmental perspective in the collection is expressed mosaically, rather than linearly. The point of departure is the perspective of a reader that is interested primarily in recent or contemporary literature but also enjoys (re)reading the classics. Ocvirk took into account the Slovenian tradition and at first incorporated the top prewar translations of eastern and western European realists and Scandinavian bestsellers of that time to the collection in addition to postwar translations of American modernists; later, he began presenting increasingly more new works that he chose by consulting connoisseurs, especially the authors of the companion studies. His selection of one hundred novels included examples of Greek and Latin classical novels (Heliodorus and Petronius), the Japanese medieval novel (Murasaki Shikibu), the Spanish renaissance novel (Cervantes), the German Baroque novel (Grimmelshausen), the French classicist novel (Voltaire), the British sentimental novel (Sterne), the German pre-romantic “Sturm-und-Drang” novel (Goethe), and the Russian romantic novel (Lermontov); he also included a thorough presentation of realistic and modern novels and variations on these from the mid-20th century. In terms of national provenance, French novels (22%) predominate, followed by Russian (18%), British (16%), American (12%), and German novels (11%). Italian novels account for 3% of all novels, and Polish and Serbian account for 2% each. Fourteen other national literatures are only represented by one novel (1%); these include the Japanese novel mentioned above, Bengali and Guatemalan novels (Tagore and Asturias, respectively), and Scandinavian and Icelandic novels (Hamsun, Lagerlof, Jacobsen, Laxness). Among the Balkan novels he included Hungarian (Jókai), Modern Greek (Kazantzakis), and the two Serbian novels (Crnjanski and Andrić), in addition to Croatian (Krleža) and Slovenian novels. Ocvirk demonstratively included the Slovenian *Hiša Marija Pomočnice* (The House of Our Lady, Help of Christians) by Ivan Cankar among the top-ranking novels. The nearly simultaneous Croatian collection *Sto največih romana sovjetske književnosti* (One Hundred of the Greatest Novels in World Literature, 1971–1982) selected by Antun Šoljan, represents 18 national literatures and begins with the renaissance novel, but does not include any Croatian or other Yugoslav literature. In comparison, Ocvirk’s collection is chronologically more extensive

and more diverse in general because it presents 22 national literatures; in addition, it contains more exhaustive commentary.

In designing and producing the companion studies, the editor used the same principles as in selecting the novels. Ocvirk defined them exclusively in terms of genre and quality: as factually reliable and stylistically perfected, relatively extensive discussions in the form of essays, around 30 pages long. He ensured their unobtrusive, but unambiguously Slovenian character by selecting the authors carefully; they were a relatively homogenous group of young Slovenian experts. However, he did not seek to “standardize” them because, just as with the authors of the novels, he valued their distinctive individual characters that differed in many ways, but were internally homogenous.

Ocvirk himself contributed the first sample study and later wrote five more. In these, he primarily analyzed the genesis of individual novels – that is, the process of their creation, their stylistic and compositional features (especially innovative features), their status in the author’s oeuvre, and reception by readers and critics; he thus connected the aspects of literary theory and literary history. He allowed his associates to have different priorities that partially depended on the different characters of and diverse issues addressed by the novels discussed, and also on their own affinities to the philosophical, sociological, psychological, and other dimensions of the novel prose. However, he insisted on consistent observation of the literary historical context in connection with that of literary theory, although he allowed argumentation of other views on the development, characteristics, and duration of the novel as a genre than those he established through his own selection.

France Bernik, in his paper “The Collected Works: The Foundation of Slovenian Literary Studies,” addresses Ocvirk’s editorial role in the national critical collection *Zbrana dela slovenskih pesnikov in pisateljev* (Collected Works of Slovenian Poets and Writers) from its start of publication in 1946 until today. In the first phase of its development, the professional and ideological-political aspects were intertwined. The professional aspect predominated at the collection’s inception, when Ocvirk was selected as its editor-in-chief and when its editorial board was composed of members with diverse world views. The penetration of Marxist ideology into the collection’s concept at the end of the 1950s happened when the Državna založba Slovenije (National Publishing House) and its editor-in-chief rejected France Koblar’s monograph on Simon Gregorčič and thus prevented monographs from being published as a constituent part of *Zbrana dela* for sev-

eral decades. Even the Slovenian classics included in the collection during the first decades of publication proved to be somewhat biased; this is indicated by the Celje Hermagoras Society's publication of works by Catholic writers during the 1950s and 60s. However, the achievements of *Zbrana dela* at that time are admirable and worthy of recognition. The pinnacle of Ocvirk's work as editor-in-chief is the extensive publication of collective works by Ivan Cankar prepared with a more youthful team of co-editors, which already reflects the collection's new image. Ocvirk's successor France Bernik (editor-in-chief since 1981) has succeeded in resolving these ideological conflicts to a great extent. Within this context, further development of *Zbrana dela* became less dependent on politics and more on capital, especially because Državna založba Slovenije stopped publishing the collection in 2000 for commercial reasons. The collection is now published by the Litera Student Publishing House in Maribor. Most of Bernik's work as editor of the collection has taken place during the democratization and independent statehood of Slovenia; therefore, the pluralist principle has been established both in selecting classic literature and choosing editors. Esthetic value has remained the strictest criterion in the canonization of writers and their acceptance into the Slovenian pantheon. Monograph production has also become less restricted. Taking all of this into account, the achievement of Slovenia's greatest literary-history and publishing project, in which several generations of literary studies researchers have taken part, is truly outstanding. Complete works have been collected for 27 of the most important poets and writers, and other classics continue to be published. A total of 220 volumes of texts with critical commentary and 8 monographs in 13 volumes have been published so far.

Janez Vrečko explores how Ocvirk – both as an editor and comparative critic – treated Srečko Kosovel, an outstanding Slovenian modernist poet that belonged to the same generation (“Ocvirk's Thesis of Constructivism in Kosovel”). Vrečko's paper examines when Ocvirk began his research on the Slovenian modernist poet Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) and his first perspectives in the introduction to the posthumous collection of Kosovel's *Pesmi* (Poems, 1931), which Ocvirk edited. This was followed by the first volume of Kosovel's *Zbrano delo* (Collected Works, 1946), which clearly shows that Ocvirk thought very highly of Kosovel when he began this important collection of his works with him. The viewpoints that Ocvirk supplemented and developed in further volumes of the *Collected Works* are also interesting. However, the turning point in his research is represented by the 1967 collection of Kosovel's works entitled *Integrali '26* (Integrals '26), which created waves in Slovenian literary history and set the stage for polemic debates and defi-

nitions. Of special interest are the movements and orientations that Ocvirk connected with Kosovel, and which seemed especially important in this regard, and those that he avoided. Ocvirk's definitions of Kosovel's impressionism, dadaism, expressionism, futurism, constructivism, and even surrealism are therefore especially interesting. Although certain facts and issues were unavailable to Ocvirk during his research – for example, documents on Russian literary constructivism that were still stored in Soviet archives – his discovery of Kosovel's affiliations with the contemporary European and Slovenian literary domain are surprisingly precise and many of them remain definitive to this day.

Ocvirk ascribed Kosovel's affiliation with the historical avant-garde as being predominantly through constructivism, and emphasized that Kosovel never gave himself up to "pure abstraction." Although some researchers have sought to prove a decisive function of Italian futurism in this relationship, detailed reading of Kosovel's poetry, his diary and correspondence, and especially the fundamental theses of Russian literary constructivism indicate that Ocvirk's reading was correct. Kosovel's familiarity with constructivism is evident from his theoretical definitions of this movement, the semantic structure of his constructivist poems (which he called "conses"), his desire to have them published in the new journals he was planning – *Dinamika*, *Konstrukter*, *KONS*, and *Volja* – and so on. Ocvirk's research therefore placed Kosovel firmly in the European literary context, and it is also to his great credit that he collected, edited, and decoded Kosovel's manuscripts, which are exceptionally difficult to read.

Dušan Moravec discusses the "Esthetic Criteria of Ocvirk's Theater Criticism." Ocvirk's first critique (published in *Mladina*, 1926) was already clearly directed against the management of the Slovenian National Theater. He sharpened his views in his essay "Premišljevanje o slovenskem gledališču" (Thoughts on the Slovenian Theater, *Ljubljanski zvon*, 1930). He was against returning to staging popular banalities (the infamous *Krpanova kobila* [Krpan's Mare]) and insisted on loyalty to the author's text; he tolerated only abridgement, but opposed any arbitrary alterations to literary works of art. He advocated psychologically profound, intimate theater (e.g., the productions directed by Ciril Debevec) and was blamed for rejecting the interpretations of the hitherto impeccable top actor Ivan Levar, especially his performance of Faust. In director Osip Šest's interpretation of Shakespeare's works (e.g., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), he also rejected internal emphases, stridency, excessive gesticulation, and caricaturing, and he demanded greater depth. Many of Ocvirk's remarks resemble events in today's theater, which

makes his views even more topical. As the editor of the literary journal *Ljubljanski zvon* (1934), he also designed a survey to reveal the reasons for the Slovenian theater crisis at that time – in Ocvirk’s opinion, this crisis was not caused merely by financial limitations. Among the actors, he respected intimate performers more than officially established actors; for example, Emil Kralj, for whom he had predicted a promising future even at that time. After his first visits to Paris and his final focus on the issues of comparative literary studies, he was no longer able to follow events in the theater, although he remained faithful to it. Even after the Second World War he gladly accepted invitations from the main Slovenian daily paper at that time, *Slovenski poročevalec* (The Slovenian Reporter). On its pages, he published his essays – which were more appropriate for an academic journal than a daily newspaper – on the first postwar performances, especially those directed by Bojan Stupica. Ocvirk saw Stupica as an original and independent creator, although he had a different orientation than the once renowned Ciril Debevec.

Finally, Boris A. Novak – also adding some flavor of personal recollection to academic debates – assesses Ocvirk’s important contribution to the Slovenian theory of verse and comparative versology. In his paper “Ocvirk’s Theory of Verse, or What Happened to the Days when Literary Studies Drove Around in a Black Mercedes?,” Novak reports that the study of metrics has a long tradition in Slovenia because pioneering steps in harmony with the spirit of the time can be traced all the way back to the Enlightenment (Blaž Kumerdej, Marko Pohlin, and Žiga Zois). The theory of verse did not acquire more rigorous form until the beginning of the 20th century, with Ivan Grafenauer’s *Iz zgodovine slovenske metrike* (On the History of Slovenian Metrics, 1916), Oton Župančič’s *Ritem in metrum* (Rhythm and Meter, 1917), and Nikolaj Omersa’s *Stiboslovje* (Versology, 1925).

It was not until Anton Ocvirk and Aleksander Isačenko’s *Slovenski verz* (Slovenian Verse, 1939) that the theory of verse was established as a scholarly discipline in Slovenia; Isačenko established statistical methods typical of the offshoot of the Russian formalism leading to early structuralism, whereas Ocvirk combined the starting points of Russian formalism with literary historical perspectives in analyzing linguistic means of expression and European versification systems. As part of his teaching at the Department of Comparative Literature of Ljubljana’s Faculty of Arts, Ocvirk dedicated special attention to the course Theory of Verse. Although his analyses of poetic language were published in a synthesized form relatively late within the collection *Literarni leksikon (Evropski verzni sistemi in slovenski verz, I–II* [Literary Lexicon: European Verse Systems and Slovenian Verse, I–II, 1980] and

Literarno delo in jezikovna izrazna sredstva [Literary Works and Linguistic Means of Expression, 1981]), Ocvirk's conception of verse deeply marked several generations of comparative literature and Slavic studies students, from whom not only university and secondary-school teachers were recruited, but also many journalists and leading Slovenian poets of these decades. Ocvirk was a pioneer not only with regard to his historical role, but also his character; he discovered new paths and engaged in large-scale research that left much at the draft level because of an excess of work and the meager conditions in emergent Slovenian literary studies. With regard to versology, Evald Koren, who took over the classes in the theory of verse from Ocvirk at the Department of Comparative Literature, added to and systematized Ocvirk's drafts with his expert knowledge in many areas.

Ocvirk's verse analyses were caught between two diametrically opposed, but complementary, poles. On the one hand – probably also because of teaching needs – he intensely dealt with the issues of versification systems (i.e., the basic metrical rules of quantitative, syllabic, accentual, and syllabotonic versification) and thus approached basic comparative versology, which developed as a special discipline only in recent decades – that is, after Ocvirk's death. This aspect of his research interest covered the traditional role of meter in poetic language from Antiquity to the end of the 19th century, and coincided with his own experience as a young poet. Ocvirk's insistence that the specific feature of poetic language is its sonorousness is thus the fruit of his attachment to cultural memory. On the other hand, Ocvirk was unusually open to innovative initiatives concerning the symbolist renovation of versification and even to the radical experiments of avant-garde poetics. Following the Russian formalists and Župančič's differentiation between *rhythm* and *meter*, he created a theory of poetic language that ended not in the overly narrow and dogmatic trenches of traditional metrics, but also made it possible to understand the phenomena of modern lyric poetry and spirit. Most likely, such openness was also the result of his friendship with Srečko Kosovel and experience with editing his poetry.

Overall, Ocvirk skillfully combined his attachment to tradition and openness to “search and research” at the levels of both esthetic taste and the methodology of literary studies. Even from today's perspective, Ocvirk's contribution deserves an extremely positive evaluation. He is properly considered the founder of Slovenian versology. Even more than this, in terms of methodology, he moved the theory of verse closer to the demands and relevant achievements of his time, making possible a solid and valuable basis for versological studies by future comparatists and

experts in Slovenian studies. In addition, even in terms of content, the majority of his analyses still “stand” and the accuracy of his conclusions is not merely the result of scholarly systematicity, but also a distinct ear for poetic language.

Whereas various general aspects have been already implied in the discussions of Anton Ocvirk, his contemporaries, and his successors, the second part of this volume is more pronounced in dealing with critical issues of ethics, subject fields, interdisciplinary dialogues, institutional positions, epistemology, and the influence and social relevance of comparative literatures in the 20th century, especially anxieties caused by the infamous “cultural turn.” Not without drawing on personalized and local experience, the papers collected in this section propose how to overcome the “crisis” of the discipline and secure its future existence.

Thus Jean Bessière, in his study “Comparative Literature and Ethics: Reinterpreting the Universalism/Relativism Dichotomy,” claims that in comparative literature studies one issue receives insufficient attention: the varieties of justifications for comparing literatures which belong to various cultures, nations and languages. The author emphasizes the word “varieties” because these justifications range from references to the notion of literature, identified to a kind of universal concept, to the assertion that literatures are linked to circumscribed communities and their links may not be referred to any kind of universal standpoint. These remarks can be reformulated quite bluntly: comparative literature studies are finally determined today by the opposition between “universalism” and “communitarism” — this last word refers to nations, cultural communities, and large social groups that do recognize literary productions as their specific and proper expressions.

For Bessière, this duality or dichotomy provides the background for most of the discussions about postcolonialism, postmodernism, and for the division between literatures identified to the periphery and literatures identified to the centre. Recent essays about geography and geopolitics of literatures today confirm these remarks. His argument intends to assert that this duality and these debates refer to the ethical justification of comparative literature. This reference is most often implicit; it is however determinant. It equates with asking a blunt question: what does allow the critic to compare literatures with statuses that are not comparable — an “old” literature and an “emerging” one; a literature that is central in literary exchanges (translation, publication, etc.) and one which is not. The word “to compare” should not be interpreted too literally; it refers to all kinds of studies.

The author uses the word “ethical” because the only justification for comparative literature, which is to be expressed, should read as follows: all literatures hold the same rights to existence and recognition, and may be read and studied simultaneously according to various and sometimes contradictory methods, because they hold these same rights. However, Bessière is quite aware that one should avoid identifying this ethical justification to some ahistorical, acultural Archimedean foothold. In order to avoid this kind of impasse, the ethical perspective which comparative literature studies imply, should be viewed as the one which enables readers and critics to treat literatures as expressing that full range of mutually conflicting goods we can live by, and need to live by in order to live as well as we can. Put in other words, comparative literature studies can be identified to a kind of ethical negotiation between literatures; this negotiation does not apply an ethical scale to literatures, but allow them to be defined as specific replies to ethical issues, which can be shared, by many nations, cultures, communities.

The question of how (comparative) literary history should or could transcend ethnocentric biases is also addressed by John Neubauer (“What are Ingressive Literary Histories, and Why Do We Need Them?”). He proposes establishing a typology of literary histories based on the degree to which they transgress borders. The “ingressive literary histories” that he envisages could transgress narrative, disciplinary, and linguistic boundaries but stay within present-day political and geographical borders.

For Neubauer, all literary histories are transgressive because they all go beyond their primary subject matter, the literary text. Redefinitions of the textual context constitute the very heart of literary history’s history: every age and every literary or cultural current has its own conventions to embed texts, and every new trend, current, and age seeks to distinguish itself from the previous one by transcending the previous conventions.

Recent literary histories have transgressed 1) narrative conventions, 2) disciplinary boundaries, and 3) political borders. Transgressions of narrative conventions usually disregard the Aristotelian criteria of beginning, middle, and end, continuity, teleology, and causality; they often abandon also the conventions specific to history and literary history, which we may label “grand récit” or organicism. The organicist narrative asked for unified, consistent, and reliable narrators – voices that have been traditionally but imprecisely been called “omniscient.” Adopting the perspectivism of literary Modernism, many twentieth-century histories of

literature have become plurivocal, partly because they are team written. Dennis Hollier's well-known French literary history does away with the overarching narrative and substitutes for it many short essays, each of them attached to the date of a particular event. This organizational structure has been adopted, for instance, in David Wellbery's German literary history (2004) and Mihály Szegedy-Maszák's Hungarian one (2007). Transgressions of disciplinary boundaries in recent literary histories include thematic literary histories, Foucauldian histories, and reception histories. Transnational literary histories transgress national borders, but need not limit themselves to traditional notions of comparative literature. Recent examples include Mario Valdés's and Djelal Kadir's 3-volume Latin-American literary history, and its sister project, the 4-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* that Marcel Cornis-Pope and Neubauer have been editing.

Ingressive literary histories as proposed by Neubauer may cross narrative and/or disciplinary borders, but they will remain within the political borders of today's map. Literary histories of a city or a region are, like archeological undertakings, site histories that dig down to layers of the past in order to recover historical sediments. But archeologists and historians may recover lost, suppressed, or vanished cultures – former occupants of the geographical site. Their site-specific work is culturally transgressive because they often unearth shards of cultures that do not belong to the one now dominating the surface. Our existing site-specific literary histories tend to remain monolingual and monocultural, for they do not attempt to reconstruct a site's multiple literary cultures, though all geographical sites have accommodated over the centuries different oral and written literary traditions.

The contemporary revival of regional, European, and even world literature is a welcome phenomenon but it raises almost insurmountable methodological questions and it contributes all too little to some of the most pressing problems of political and cultural rapprochement. Ingressive literary histories may offer theoretically and practically useful alternatives.

Tomo Virk, in his "Universal or National, Global, or Local: Or a Plural Comparative Literature," reconsiders the notions of world literature, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and universalism that are also dealt with by Juvan, Zelenka, Neubauer, Bessière, Milutinović, and Eoyang. According to Virk, soon after it was launched, comparative literature began to shape its identity in line with the national characteristics of the major Western nations that engaged in it. Thus, in the 20th century there are characteristic French, German, American, Russian, Czech, and other

“schools” of comparative literature that are nonetheless considered part of the same discipline, despite the fact that one can often observe diametrically opposed points of view among them with regard to the basic methodology and content of the field. At the same time, especially from the end of the Second World War onwards to a considerable degree probably in connection with the rise of comparative literature in the United States, spurred by the immigration of leading European scholars in the humanities (Roman Jakobson, Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, René Wellek, Theodor Adorno, etc.) – there was an increasing belief in comparative studies as a universal discipline in the humanities, in which research primarily focuses on what is universally human. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the entire field of the humanities was caught up in new changes in the paradigm of scholarly methodology. In comparative literature, this is also shown (among other things) by the fact that under the influence of deconstruction, new historicism, “postmodern” theories and philosophies, postcolonial theory, gender studies, and so on – humanistic universalism is subject to sharp criticism, and one of the consequences of this has been the rejection of the concept of *world literature*.

However, in the past decade increasing globalization in all areas has been pushing comparative literature to renewed reflection on its stance toward “universalism.” This is seen, for example, in quite intense attempts at partial rehabilitation (and at the same time, of course, conceptual renewal) of the concept of world literature (e.g., by David Damrosch), and also in visions (really no less universalistic than the criticized old “humanistic” ones) of a global or even planetary comparative literature (e.g., by Gayatri Spivak). These attempts have also been subject to criticism, which drew attention to certain weaknesses of this new “postmodern” universalism. On the one hand, the concept of “planetary” literature appears to be too abstract. On the other hand, attempts at a new synthesis that is critical toward traditional humanistic thought have been driven to such a unitarian extremity in certain cases that it has been suggested that the discipline (which has distinguished itself since its very beginning by its multilingualism and respect for diversity) “codify” a single language for scholarly communication: namely, English (cf. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek). The impression is that many of these quandaries are the result of circumstances that, for various reasons, certain “great” national comparative literatures are again trying to assert their specific position and their specific perspectives on the discipline as universal, and in doing so are forgetting their principled criticism of universalism. Virk’s paper attempts to reflect on the situation that has arisen, draw attention to some insufficiently considered models of comparative studies, and seek grounds for a different, plural comparative literature.

More than fifty years ago Erich Auerbach asked the two main questions associated with writing a history of world literature: how to synthesize such a vast amount of material, and how to find a thread that may help compose it as a meaningful whole. This problem lies at the heart of Zoran Milutinović's paper "Is a History of World Literature Possible?"

Over the last decade, two systematic attempts were made to revive the idea of such a synthesis. The author of the first project is Pascale Casanova, who in her book *La République mondiale des lettres* (The World Republic of Letters) introduces the idea of the world literary space. Consistent with her general conceptual framework of a market for exchanging non-marketable values, and of a non-economic economy, Casanova describes literary value as *that which is considered valuable*. However, it remains unclear whose judgment of value matters: those of the consecrating authorities in the centers of the world literary space, or of the wider international readership? Moreover, Casanova explicitly says that there are values that the market has not yet recognized. Literary value is defined at the same time as that which is considered valuable by the consecrated authorities, and that which they do *not yet* consider as such, but might do so if given a chance to read it. Given the difficulties in defining the notion of literary value, the metaphor of the non-economic economy, which is the underlying basis of Casanova's book, is not a suitable framework for a history of world literature.

The author of the second project is Franco Moretti. The real task for Moretti's method is not textual interpretation of individual works, but construction of abstract models (graphs, maps, and trees), which might be interpreted themselves only later. However, if these models are not preceded by interpretations that instruct us what to look for, then we must start from as many starting points as possible. This is how the problem of the enormous number of texts to be read, thrown out the window, so to speak, creeps back through the chimney as the problem of the enormous number of starting points to follow. Moretti's project resembles the two earlier ones: namely, the positivistic history of literature and structuralism. Milutinović concludes that it is worth remembering that both projects were abandoned before any vision of the whole was reached.

Eugene Eoyang, in parallel with Virk, rejects currently prevailing notions that comparative literature is obsolete. In addition, he proposes how to enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of International Comparative Literature Association in the present context of globalization ("Synergies and Synesthesias: An

Intraworldly Comparative Literature”). According to Eoyang, the death of comparative literature, as promoted by Susan Bassnett and reported by Gayatri Spivak, is premature. He considers and addresses three criticisms against the discipline: (1) that it is ill-defined, (2) that it is Eurocentric, and (3) that it is not systematic. All three criticisms are based on faulty premises: (1) that a discipline must be well-defined to be a discipline, (2) that Eurocentricism persists in the field, and (3) that systematicity is salient for every discipline. Eoyang maintains that a true discipline is dynamic, not stagnant, which means that it cannot be properly delimited: any delimitations are merely boundaries to be crossed, limits to be exceeded. To suggest that comparative literature is Eurocentric ignores the fact that comparative literature thrives in such venues as China, Japan, and Brazil. As a discipline, comparative literature, unlike most disciplines, always insists on its own limitations and vulnerabilities, but it has been fecund in generating a host of disciplines, from Film Studies to Cultural Studies, Translation Studies, and Post-colonial Studies. The reports of the demise of the field betray a provinciality which is precisely at odds with the precepts of comparative literature, because they focus on the situation in the United States, where institutional support for the field, and for the humanities in general, has declined in recent years. It is a decline, however, that is not mirrored in other parts of the world. And, if the ICLA can be said to be representative of the field, it is far less Eurocentric than it has been in the past, since four of the last six triennial Congresses have been held in venues outside North America and Europe.

The last part of Eoyang’s paper addresses the challenge of globalization. Attempts must be made to subsidize the travel costs of members for whom international costs to Congresses would be otherwise prohibitive. The presentations at conferences should involve oral presentation in one language, and graphic presentation (text scrolling on computer projections) in another language, so that no one is incommoded into using a language s/he is not comfortable with, and no one is excluded by the proceedings because s/he does not understand the medium of discourse. In view of the worldwide spread of comparative literature, the restriction of the official languages of the ICLA to English and French seems Eurocentric, and it is recommended that an Asian language be included among the ICLA’s official languages. Finally, the dissemination of scholarship at ICLA conferences must be re-examined and revamped. The present tradition of publishing comprehensive proceedings is neither efficient nor discriminating, and it is proposed that papers be made available on the ICLA website within months after the Congresses, and that publication of coherent volumes proceed concurrently on an individual basis, rather than appearing in multivolume compendia, which, in any event, appear many

years after the papers have been presented. The use of computer technology and computer databases will not only expedite availability of scholarship in comparative literature, but they will also facilitate their access and their “searchability.”

Péter Hajdu opposes talk about the crisis of comparative literature from a differently localized perspective – by drawing on the discipline’s cosmopolitan traditions in Hungary (“Neohelicon’s Local Traditions and Present Strategies”). *Neohelicon* is the best-known achievement of comparative literature studies in Hungary. It was originally designed to promote the project “A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages” launched under the auspices of the ICLA. The connection with the ICLA project was created through one of the founder editors, György Mihály Vajda, an enthusiastic organizer of both the journal and comparative literary history. The journal’s title and subtitle emphasize the local and regional traditions of comparative literature – namely, *Helicon*, edited and printed in Debrecen, Hungary in the 1930s, and *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, a truly polyglot journal published by Hugo Meltzl in Kolozsvár, Hungary (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania) between 1877 and 1888. The latter represented a challenge to the literary nationalism of the European great powers, and the former advertised the peaceful principles of world literature during the gloomy years of the Second World War. Hugo Meltzl established the very first journal on comparative literature as an unlimitedly polyglot forum. He regarded the discipline as being *in statu nascendi*, and he thought that what was important in the given situation was collecting literary and folklore materials from the widest areas possible rather than comparing what was directly and easily available.

The *Commission Internationale d’Histoire littéraire moderne* was the first international association for literary studies, and Jean Hankiss organized its first congress in Budapest in 1931, which was an important event in the history of comparative literature due to its methodological and theoretical focus. Then he tried to run an international journal focusing on general problems, such as literary epochs and genres, but after some years the war frustrated his efforts.

Joining such traditions, *Neohelicon* tries to face the challenges of the present crisis of comparative literature. From the very beginning it has published thematically unified issues, promoting discussion rather than declaring final results, because in comparative literature the context of analysis has become literally global and we have entered the age of collective approaches. Emphasis is placed on the literatures of East-Central Europe, but in recent years East-West comparison

and the literatures of East Asia have become increasingly important themes in the journal.

In her paper “What Does It Mean to Study Comparative Literature in Macedonia,” Sonja Stojmenska-Elzeser also connects global issues with perspectives from “peripheral” centers of comparative activities. From her personal point of view on the ethics and politics of comparative literature, she discusses the status of the discipline in general and its institutional conditions in Macedonia.

In some areas of the world, comparative literature has made great progress in the past decade and has become one of the most popular academic disciplines in the humanities. In contrast, traditional centers are no longer so active and productive. Why is this so? What does this imply for “peripheral” cultures, such as Macedonia? Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concept of “planetarism” instead of globalization (in her *Death of a Discipline*, 2003) offers a perspective that is less postcolonial but more ecological, shifting the main subject from local otherness to the relationship with the planet Earth. This corresponds to the traditional definition of comparative literature as a kind of “planetary humanity” by Yves Chevrel (*La littérature comparée* [Comparative Literature], 1997). In addition, the concept of “decolonization” by the Italian comparatist Armando Gnisci emphasizes the ethical and political aspect of comparative literature, and reflects mondialism as an appropriate comprehension of the discipline as a dialog between differences through universal comparisons. These visions of comparative literature are suitable for the ideological needs of small, neglected, and marginal cultures such as Macedonian. Perhaps this is the reason for the very active institutional life of comparative literature at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

The structure of the Institute for Macedonian Literature has included a Department of Theory and Comparative Literature from its very beginning 25 years ago, which is just one year fewer than the same department at the Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology. The institutional development of comparative literature in Macedonia began with the ICLA Colloquium held in Ohrid 20–25 August 1981, which was attended by international authorities including René Wellek, Douwe Fokkema, Claudio Guillén, Yves Chevrel, Henry Remak, and Ulrich Weisstein. There have been participants from Macedonia at almost all of the ICLA congresses. The institute’s Department of Comparative Literature has published four volumes (and is preparing a fifth one) of comparative studies (*Književni kontekst/Literary Context*). There are several projects at the Academy of Sciences and Arts, and there

is an online comparative literature journal (*Mirage*). In addition, the Macedonian Association for Comparative Literature organizes discussions, participates in comparative literature conferences worldwide, translates standard works on comparative literature into Macedonian, and so on. One special feature is that in the secondary school program in Macedonia comparative literature can be selected as a subject in advanced years and there is a textbook for this purpose. All of this permits us to speak of a Macedonian School of comparative literature. Macedonian comparatists are developing active relations with other schools, departments, and institutions of comparative literature, especially with French and Italian (several of Armando Gnisci's works have been translated into Macedonian), with the Slovak school (Dionýz Ďurišin), and with comparatists from Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia. Anton Ocvirk was also one of the great teachers of Macedonian comparatists.

Although the status of the discipline in Macedonia is strong, there are many practical problems. For example, students that graduate from the comparative literature program are not recognized as qualified literature instructors at secondary schools; they have difficulty finding employment in general. However, many of the most successful intellectuals in the country are graduates of the comparative literature program. Projects in comparative literature hardly receive any government funding and they rely on individual initiatives and supporters. The old rivalry between national literature studies and comparative studies is still very robust and is damaging the educational system in general. Some literary scholars declare themselves to be comparatists, but they use the methodology of comparative literature inappropriately and superficially. In theory, interdisciplinarity is very topical, but there is no concrete cooperation. Teamwork in general is at an unsatisfactory level. Beyond academia, there is an even greater ignorance of comparative literature. This reflects the general crisis of the humanities, especially that of literature as art. Reading is almost an abandoned practice, and this is the real problem that comparatists must address.

In conclusion, Stojmenska-Elzeser proposes that the ethics of comparative literature should become apparent in a stronger, well-organized, and broader educational program available to all profiles of intellectuals. Literary life should be the area where concrete results from an institutionally strong comparative literature program are made manifest.

The next section contains discussions about the relationship between national and comparative literary histories, Eurocentrism and globalism, comparative lit-

erature and cultural studies or cultural history, and literary scholarship and the new media. In his paper "From Literature to Culture – and Back," Vladimir Biti starts from the historical fact that, with the rising globalization of literature toward the end of the 19th century, national literary histories were gradually replaced by a European perspective as their putative all-embracing framework. Consequently, in the framework of established comparative literature departments European literature enjoyed priority over non-European literatures, an asymmetry that was then transferred into relations between the European literatures themselves. After several decades of its implementation and development, the underlying discriminative pattern of this politics of representation came to the fore, compromising the European "progressive" idea of history. In order to take up what was excommunicated by it (i.e., not only non-European but also European subordinated and marginalized cultures), the Cultural Studies project was launched in the 1960s.

From its perspective challenging the divisions between particular national literatures, the idea of comparative literature was insufficient. Not only these divisions, but the very idea of literature had to be reshaped in order to include its incommensurable conceptualizations within the differently structured and unequally supported cultural frameworks. The Cultural Studies project therefore grew out of the suspicion of interdisciplinary programs that merely adopt an all-inclusive approach without engaging with concerns about the politics of representation and knowledge that underlies it. Out of such suspicion, it focuses on the "leftover" elements of disciplinary expertise in a very similar way as, a century or so ago, the heterogeneous form of the novel used to. This form with its inclination towards marginal and shadowy customs of bourgeois society gradually turned (as de Certeau puts it) into "the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science." It is exactly in this simultaneously undisciplined and transdisciplinary way that Cultural Studies use to regard itself. As one commentator put it, the entire British Cultural Studies project relies on the "ability to plunder the more established disciplines while remaining separate from them." However, despite opposite intentions, one cannot oversee its concordance with Leavis' project of all-encompassing literary studies because in both cases the "quasi-discipline" in the end powerfully embraces and supersedes the disciplines. As in the case of the novel, the well-established literary genre taken by de Certeau to be the transgressing model for forthcoming transdisciplinary research, the delineated trajectory implies the institutional self-empowerment of Cultural Studies and amounts to similarly discriminating consequences. We therefore recently witnessed the "counter-culturalist turn" induced by the resistance to such an appeasement offered by literature's unidentifiable sin-

gularity. The concluding part of Biti's paper deals with this turn in order to highlight some problematic consequences of the idea of literature put forth by it.

Vanesa Matajc is also intrigued by the implications of the "cultural turn" for comparative literature ("Facing a Trend: Comparative Literary Studies and Cultural History"). Confronted with the historical and cultural turns, comparative literary studies must rethink its subject (i.e., literature in its literariness) and stress its influence on the postmodern esthetic turn (cf. Ankersmit). In the efforts to safeguard its own specific nature, comparative literature scrutinizes the concepts of text and (cultural) context, representation and construction, self-referentiality, and polysemy. Aristotle's distinction between poetics and rhetoric in his concept of mimesis may be used as a model of the distinction between different uses of literariness in cultural studies, cultural history, and comparative literary studies. Rhetorically formed mimesis tends to be enacted through the self-referential and polysemous reality of a literary text. Literary rhetoric has no utilitarian purpose, and no intention to change any extra-textual (cultural, historical) reality. However, cultural studies and (occasionally) cultural history are using the literary text pragmatically, reducing it to a discourse of a pragmatic rhetoric, or to the cultural sign (in Barthes' sense). In both ways, the literary text as a self-referential sign is losing its literary nature. Matajc warns us against searching for a compromise between the literary, historical, and cultural at the purely arbitrary level of a merger. Instead, we should stress the distinctive nature of each discipline (i.e., comparative literature studies, cultural studies, and cultural history) as well as the specificity of their respective subjects. Matajc's article compares certain characteristics of the above disciplines, outlines their development, and finally raises the question of their contact zone – that of the literary canon.

This cultural construction is analyzed based on the example of the three invariants of the Slovenian literary canon in the period 1944/45–1990, and of their use of France Balantič's poetry. In 1943, Balantič fought in the anti-communist forces; he lost his life in battle in 1943. After the Second World War he was declared a traitor to the revolution, as well as to his nation. His poetry found itself on *index librorum prohibitorum* (27 July 1945). This political-ideological invariant of the canon was constructed by the communist regime. The second political-ideological invariant of the canon, a parallel one, was constructed by the anti-communist opposition, mainly in political diaspora in Argentina. Both invariants of the Slovenian literary canon use Balantič's literary texts as cultural means of their pragmatic rhetoric, forgetting the literary structure of texts, as well as the fact that there is no trace (not

even one motif) of political engagement in Balantič's poetry (it is but an expression of the modern crisis of a religious person in the tradition of Baudelaire). Only the third invariant of the Slovenian literary canon has been able to recognize a literary-esthetic dimension in Balantič's poetry, not reducing Balantič's personal history to a cultural sign. The third invariant stresses the self-referentiality and polysemy of Balantič's poetry; it is thanks to these characteristics that Balantič's texts were included in the literary canon in the first place (and become available for all kinds of pragmatic cultural uses). This literary-esthetic structure should remain the central subject of literary scholarship because it keeps its literariness. The political-ideological constructions of a canon are, according to their pragmatic purposes, the subject of cultural history and cultural studies; literary studies can use their findings for exploring the historical reception of literary works and for the evidence of the special nature of literature.

Evald Koren shares Matajč's intention to defend literariness and regard it as a still valuable and unavoidable regulative idea for comparative and national literary histories. In his paper "The Lady Vanishes, or Is Literature Truly Threatened in the *New* Comparative Literature and the *New* Histories of National Literatures?" he insists that, by definition, literature should be the main (if not the sole) subject of study for both the history of national literature and comparative literature. With regard to the specific circumstances of their creation and development, and the diametrically opposed goals that complement one another, the level of research attention that they dedicated to literature was different. The history of individual literature focused more intensely, in detail or synthetically, on the study of literary works themselves, a specific author's oeuvre, or the literature of a specific period or nation, whereas comparative literature, which sought major movements and extensive overviews, aimed to reveal various supranational connections, and occasionally focused on extra-literary missions, often made use of the findings of national literary histories. However, it was not until the appearance of "new" histories of literature – that is, the French (*A New History of French Literature*, 1989) and the German (*A New History of German Literature*, 2004) – that the national literary historiography relationship towards literature changed. Namely, neither of these extensive volumes is a history of *literature* or *history*, but rather some sort of cultural chronology, or chronologically organized compilations of a company of authors on various important cultural and other events from the lives of these two nations. That literature does not have a sufficiently solid place in these two publications is clearly demonstrated by a remark by one of the reviewers, who wrote that *A New History of German Literature* not only features the great men like Hegel, Kant, Goethe,

Beethoven, and Freud, but also (!) outlines literary works and themes in addition to historical events, compositions, and so on. It is generally true that traditional literatures, when referring to cultural, political, and economic events, reached into other areas as well, but they only used these to frame literature in a specific period, while literature remained the undisputed central theme.

This unfavorable attitude has marked comparative literary studies more evidently than national literary studies, which can be seen in the events that have taken place in the past decade, especially in English-speaking countries. It was not enough that the priority research field of this discipline had changed, but they sought to rename it accordingly; some even went so far as to want it buried alive, as though comparative cultural studies could not exist alongside traditional comparative literature, which has also long dealt with transliterary questions in one way or another. In addition, cultural studies can use the findings of comparative literature just as comparative literature uses the findings of national literary studies. The new treatment of literature, whose reputation and importance have indeed decreased in the eyes of the general public, cannot reveal itself more fatally than in the most intimate activity concerning literature – that is, the empirical research that is focused on various forms of literary character or, in other words, those special features, characteristics, and functions by which literary works are distinguished in contrast to nonartistic texts.

Any interpretative kind of treatment of literariness does not simply imply a comparative activity because the interest in it is inherent in researchers of any national literature. Such analysis becomes eminently a comparative literary history procedure at the moment that it traces the foreign-language paths of the original text, or when it studies it in its foreign manifestations. In this case, researchers deal with questions that are raised when comparing various foreign-language versions. For example, they are interested in which procedures and tools were used by individual translators, how the translations realize semantic and non-semantic formal characteristics, to what extent various translators' solutions depend on the character of their language, their literary and linguistic knowledge, artistic sensitivity, creative will, and their translation method, and, finally, what the balance of the analyzed translations demonstrates. These tasks will most easily be dealt with by a comparatist as defined by René Etiemble: one that possesses encyclopedic knowledge, knows many languages, and has personally and deeply experienced the beauty of literature.

In terms of methodology, translation and its special qualities have always been of interest to comparative literature. However, it is one thing to treat it as an important functional means of mediation between various literatures, and a totally different thing if, by comparing various translated versions of a literary work, all the attention is focused on their artistic features. In this case, one speaks of literature and literariness, and here one can definitely refer to comparative literature. There is no need to rename this discipline translation studies or, for example, divide it into comparative cultural studies and translation studies, or – even worse – to simply abolish it.

In comparison with Koren, Monica Spiridon seems to be more favorably disposed towards the new position and dynamics of both literature and comparative literary studies that found themselves in a radically changed media context. In her paper entitled “The ‘New Alliances’ in the Digital Age: The Book, the Science, and the Bite,” she points to the strenuous dynamics of contemporary comparative literature – new alliances, spectacular “turns,” intensive trade of models, and so on – identifying such processes as symptoms of a self-induced crisis of status and of academic visibility of this discipline. Spiridon mainly focuses on two distinct aspects of these developments: first the general international context, and second the Romanian case in point. From an all-encompassing perspective, we cannot disregard the steady endeavor of professional comparatists to blur the limits between metaliterature and science, also boosted by the *esthetic turn* in postmodern sciences. Nowadays the fuzzy boundaries between disparate types of intellectual discourse enhance the rapprochement between the hard sciences and the humanities, giving birth to “weak epistemologies.” As a local case in point, in Romania at a speculative level, a puzzling two-way traffic of concepts and methods is underway. Starting from recent hypotheses of an infinite number of incommensurable paradigms within science, the humanities have been hastily rated in the same category as literary metadiscourses. As regards the pragmatic level of the academic curricula, Romanian comparative literature constantly seeks partnership with theories of visual discourses, especially with theories of film and the new digital media, mainly for the sake of self-security on the intellectual market. Paradoxically enough, modern theories of the movie, which arouse by borrowing conceptual tools from literary studies, now emerge as pristine sources of models for comparatists alongside the fashionable applied area of video-textual study in comparative literature.

By the way of conclusion to a volume that attempted to cast a retrospective glance at distant and recent developments in comparative literature, its continuities, and its discontinuities, Galin Tihanov asks what (comparative) literary

history's future perspectives and challenges are ("The Future of Literary History: Three Challenges in the 21st Century"). He maintains that the future of literary history appears precarious but perhaps not as gloomy as some may wish to think. Even though the appeals to abandon literary history have, ironically, a century-long history, the sense of crisis and methodological predicament did not begin to be acutely felt until the 1980s when attempts at reforming the craft of literary historiography culminated in the by now well-known *A New History of French Literature* (1989). Many saw this project as an assault on traditional literary history, while having to admit that its editor, Denis Hollier, had recognized the difficulties besetting the discipline upon the arrival of postmodernism and post-structuralism and had responded in an innovative, if inconclusive, fashion. In the next decade, the question of the very possibility of literary history was posed with some urgency, but early 21st-century responses to it seem to have been marked by moderation and constructive skepticism rather than radical denial. A recent international conference organized by Marko Juvan and Darko Dolinar at the Institute for Slovenian literature and literary studies in Ljubljana, where a number of very interesting papers were presented, has offered a good example of this attitude.

How literary history evolves will largely depend on the modifications of the wider framework in which its evolution takes place. To Tihanov, understanding these modifications seems to be an essential first step. In his paper the author focuses on three factors (the nation state, the media, and the evolution of society under the pressures of changing demographics), and seeks to elucidate and weigh their importance for literary history.