

The book cover features a background of overlapping, semi-transparent blue circles of various sizes, creating a textured, mosaic-like effect. A white rectangular box is positioned in the upper-middle section, containing the title and subtitle. Below this box is a solid blue horizontal band with the editors' names in white text. A vertical black bar runs along the left edge of the cover.

Comparative Literature in Europe

Challenges and Perspectives

Edited by Nikol Dziub and
Frédérique Toudoire-Surlapierre

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TEXTUAL NOTE

For ease of reading, in the text the titles and original words are placed in parentheses, in the bibliographies the original titles are placed in square brackets.

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

FRÉDÉRIQUE TOUDOIRE-SURLAPIERRE

Our working hypothesis is that a “Europe of comparisons” is a meaningful proposition. I would like to sketch out the main project, ideas and concepts underlying this book by starting from a question that we often have to face (a very annoying question for comparative researchers, because in fact, that questioning presupposes the vagueness of our discipline): what is exactly comparative literature? But perhaps, we should rather answer another question: why is it so important to know what we do when we compare? Comparison is everywhere, simply because comparison is deeply human. We need comparison, not only because we like comparing ourselves to others, but also because it is a way of thinking, that reveals things.

Comparative literature is a discipline implying relationship, or rather a discipline that has chosen the other (or the stranger) as the first comparison standard. This perspective allows us to be put in relation with other entities (disciplines, corpuses, objects, subjects). It is not enough to say that comparative literature brings several books, texts or masterpieces together. We should add that this comparative principle implies a specific holistic way of thinking the world. Ours is the opposite of an autotelic or autarkic conception of literature. The comparative process enables us to bring out elements that may not have been seen before, and to discover a meaning derived from the comparison.

We know the different functions of comparative literature:

1) *A finding function*: comparative literature allows us to become familiar with the unknown, but it contains the risk of misleading us because it encourages identification of objects, or may replace a specific reflection.

2) *A function of representation and recognition*: at first, it seems to be opposed to the first function. Comparative literature responds to a human need (a simple and basic one): we try to find *the known in the unknown*. The danger lies in the analogies-screens (which are presented to avoid questioning the unexpected) and in the lack of epistemological precaution.

3) A *prospecting or anticipation function*, which can also be called “generalization function”.

Comparative literature corresponds to an expansive movement of the human: we need to generalize and to check the validity of the concepts we invent. We have to know the meaning of comparison itself and we have to wonder where we focus the lights: on the meaning of each literary work, on their mutual relations, on the meaning of the title or on the corpus.

On the other hand, comparison includes (and means) comparing oneself. Comparison is a human tropism that consists in comparing oneself to others, it looks like what René Girard (1961) has called “the triangulation of desire”¹ (“le désir triangulaire”): I desire what my neighbor owns, desires or likes. Comparison is involved in the coupling between me and others, and as Paul Ricœur (1986) said: “the other is another me similar to me, a me like me”. It proceeds here by direct transfer of the meaning “I”. We have to notice the importance of the word “like”: “To say that you think like me, that you feel like me pain and pleasure, means to be able to imagine what I would think and feel if I were in your place” (*ibidem*). Comparison interrogates the relationship between self and the other, hearing like another (Ricœur 1996). The characteristic of the comparison is to be able to associate the same and the other in the same movement, as Paul Ricœur explains. To give another person the power to say “I”, I have to compare his/her behavior to mine and proceed with a fourth proportional argument based on the resemblance between the behavior of others perceived from outside and mine tested in its direct expression. If I postulate that the other is *like* me, it means that I make him/her my fellow (“*like*” is very important, it makes all the difference). We have to consider that the other is a subject like any other. He/she is a subject perceiving me as another one. This means that the other person sees me as “another”. What can be deduced from that? We can make five remarks:

- 1) Comparison is a relation which contains by principle a symmetrical or reciprocal process.
- 2) Comparison implies interaction.
- 3) Comparison is an existential project: I do not only project properties and data linked to the analogical process, I also project elements belonging to the human psyche.

¹ All translations are mine.

- 4) Comparison induces a particular way of conceiving “each other”. This phrase should be interpreted literally, meaning that the others are made of each one.
- 5) Comparison depends on the context, the space, the period.

Guy Jucquois (1989, 15-17) says that there are golden ages of comparatism and these periods correspond to times when the values vindicated are humanism, otherness, the importance of foreign trade, but also the preeminence of trade. Comparative studies focus on the other and on otherness, but this discipline is, so to speak, naturally expansive, so that we can use comparison in several disciplines or fields: culture, sociology, media, law... What about our contemporary age of globalization? Is it a good period for comparisons? On the one hand, we can answer “yes”, because as we know each other better, we are moving expansively, so more comparisons are possible. On the other hand, the globalization of literature tends to reduce the differences between literatures, making them all alike. It does not mean that there is no more comparatism but that comparison has changed perspective. The aim of comparatism will now be rather to seek the differences than the common points.

Our third observation above is borrowed from Ricœur. For him, one of the skills of analogy is to “preserve and identify in all relationships with our contemporaries, our predecessors and successors”. Recognizing someone according to Ricœur (1996) is “comparing a present perception to a memory”. Comparison has to do with recognition, it inscribes human beings in a lineage and a filiation. We can say that comparison is genealogical, it creates continuity, or at least it provides the information needed to think of it. What Paul Ricœur calls “the analogy of the ego” is the definition of our relationship to others (defined as those who precede us, those who accompany us and those who follow us), which allows us to recognize “the difference between the course of history and the course of things”. It is also a matter of time. We have to take into account the historical context, the evolution (the passing of time). All this allows us to state that the comparison is both vertical and horizontal. The comparison inscribes the subject in synchrony and in diachrony. Or to say it quite differently: comparison is both syntagmatic and paradigmatic.

If we return to our fourth observation, we remember the ironic title of Étiemble’s *Comparison is not Reason* (*Comparaison n’est pas raison*). This title should be contextualized: the book was written in 1963, and the subtitle is important—*The Crisis of Comparative Literature*. Étiemble borrowed this title from Diderot’s *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb* (2010, 36): “But I leave this figurative language [...] and I return to the tone of

philosophy for which we need reasons and not comparisons”. Étiemble tried to portray the ideal comparatist as a cultured humanist. This book is an implicit answer to the criticism according to which the comparison is not scientific. As we know, the main reproach made to comparative literature is its lack of scientificity. Comparison is one of the main intellectual tools implemented in critical thinking. In *Further Concepts of Criticism*, Rene Wellek (1970, 34-58) devotes several chapters to general and comparative literature: he highlights the capacity to provide a choice whose relevance is due to the ability to compare oneself to others. It is a kind of self-criticism and introspective self-examination, which has the function of channeling the narcissistic impulses of an intellectual practice. Comparative literature “comforts” us from what Freud called “our three narcissistic wounds”:

- 1) The earth is not the center of the solar system;
- 2) We are made of organic materials;
- 3) We don't control everything inside ourselves.

Today, we know that the statement by Emperor Augustus in *Cinna* of Corneille, “I am master of myself as of the universe;/I am master, I wish to be”, is a thing easier said than done. This double movement is precisely what characterizes comparison—a balance between narcissistic self-esteem that arouses thought and the narcissistic wounds. The comparison is made of this double movement: it is “the double temptation of comparison”. On one side, there is an egocentric temptation that the comparison reveals several elements of our identity. On the other side, comparison uses *otherness* as a vector of understanding. It is based on the principle of shifting perspectives and integrating the opinion of others. This double temptation is found in the definition of the comparative subject (the person who compares) who must have at the same time a capacity for decentering (indispensable for objectivity) and a capacity for self-implication (*the comparative subject* compares and crosses works, whereas *his intersubjectivity* makes him a subject).

Following on from that, two other questions must be answered: *how* do we compare and *why* do we need to compare? Why do we use comparison? Why do we prefer sometimes identify the *same* and sometimes make the *difference* emerge? To answer, it is necessary to identify where “our need for comparison” (Toudoire-Surlapierre 2009, 67) comes from: this has never been done before. I chose this title because of a small text of the Swedish existentialist writer, Stig Dagerman: *Vårt behov av tröst* (1955), which can be translated as *Our Need for Consolation is*

Insatiable. Can we show the existence of a specific comparative behavioral and intellectual way of thinking? Answering yes to this question leads to ask: is it inherent in human nature? Is this comparison *evolutive* (or not)? Does it follow the evolution of society and what makes it evolve: history, mentalities, peoples, economy, culture, or even politics and ideology? Is it a fact of Western culture (in comparison with Asia)? Are there European specificities? All these questions postulate that the history of countries in Europe, together with mentalities, manners, and culture, are all comparison criteria. Comparing induces a specific conception of the study of artworks and texts, which integrates ontological considerations. If I decide to compare, it means that I adhere to a specific ethical position, I build a specific conception of the (literary) world. It even involves an ethical or ontological posture (how I relate to others). It is a human behavior emblematic of our way of positioning ourselves in relation to the group but it also reveals something about our relationship to minorities, to so-called marginal, minor or dominated cultures. Comparison challenges the postulate of a thought of the oneness stigmatized as an overvaluation of originality and singularity. This corresponds to our European (Western) phantasm of the unique work: for Hans Belting (2001, 34), “the masterpiece” is a “product of the European imagination”. Belting’s way of thinking against the *unicity* of an artwork brings him to favor the thought of an open system which echoes directly with the comparative corpus, defined as open or closed. Envisaging European literature as a whole (and not as a monad) requires conceiving it as an *archipelago* more than an insular block. It is one of the features of European culture. It is no coincidence that Goethe’s concept of “Weltliteratur” was translated as “universal literature”. In reality, Goethe was referring to a Chinese novel that had just been translated into French and he wanted to show the importance of translation. Nowadays, this word enjoys worldwide critical success. This success, as often in a variety of cases, is based both on a *misunderstanding* and a *real need*. The simple explanation is that this word is *intuitively understandable*, even if it is not translated, it is easy to understand for everybody, irrespective of one’s language. It also echoes a certain evolution of our contemporary world where interconnection and interaction prevail as active concepts. Etiemble wonders if one can compare “practices of assembly in Ethiopia, those of the Greek cities and those of the Cossacks of the twentieth century”. For him, it amounts to “bringing closer people or things of different nature or species [whereas they cannot be totally assimilated]”. It is difficult to identify a real difference, or to bring together very distant domains, but the interest for us is that the comparison goes from the most common to the

most singular, it moves away from an iterative model to take in new data (thus moving towards the unknown). Comparing involves both associating and dissociating. There is a double function of comparison, combining integration and differentiation. But when we compare, we never have a perfect and exact balance, we are always caught in a circulation, a movement between the two ends of the scale, with on one side *integration* and on the other side *differentiation*. This is a *scalar principle* which can be called *comparative gradation*. Each of us has to wonder which way he looks and tries to know the relations inside the corpus and define the *nature* of these relations: interactions, circulations, connections, relations, contacts, influences, convergences...

For a comparative approach, the following data must be articulated:

1) *The corpus*. The first condition is the plurality of the corpus (it is a *sine qua non*), which may imply a corpus with linguistic differences, but also affect the nature of the corpus, with two possible strategies: construction by *deviation* which leads to what the Anglo-Saxons call “contrastive literatures”, or on the contrary promotion of the *homogeneity* of the corpus.

2) *The title or the subject*: the choice of this element justifies associating the texts together. If it is too obvious, it does not make it possible to identify a problem. A great subject privileges a principle of *decentering* or *disorientation*.

3) *The thesis*: comparative literature is not only a subject, there must also be a *hypothesis*. We have to show something new and original. There must be some paradox, enigma, or even misunderstanding in our subject.

4) *The method (or the approach)*: this includes the conditions of comparisons. We can classify them (theoretical, æsthetic, methodological, thematic, epistemological), because they allow us to compare the works with each other. Furthermore, they provide an answer to the question: “How do I compare the works?”

5) *The results*: we always have to wonder why we compare and what we are looking for, but also what we can do with the results obtained. It is the result that brings out the relevance of the analysis, but comparison can be problematic, it can raise enigmas, mysteries, misunderstandings or malfunctions of the cultural field. What is most difficult is to determine the extent of these consequences. We have to ask if it will make us think differently.

An important question for the comparative researchers is the *position*, the *point of view* they adopt. There are three possibilities. First position: when we are rather on the side of the integrative trend. The main disadvantage is to bring everything back to the same, for example when we compare aesthetic movements of different countries. If we compare the symbolist or decadent movement in France and Belgium, the danger is to show that they *look alike*. It is not certain that this research may bring new and exciting conclusions. It is difficult to have interpretative tracks: we discover something we already knew. What we have learnt is to bring together in order to assimilate: it is an integrative, congruent approach, which makes it possible to project properties or other characteristics from one of the items to the other (or others).

Second position: the comparative researcher is rather on the side of the differences. He wants to *compare the incomparable*, as Marcel Detienne said in his book *Comparer l'incomparable* (2000). Detienne started from the principle that nothing is incomparable, and that we have a right to build comparables, without limiting oneself to comparing what is acquired and therefore what is obviously similar. Marcel Detienne considers that we can compare everything: for him, we can compare the *Russian formalist tradition* and the *English Romantic Movement*, or *Taoist lyricism* and the *Romanian novel*. These areas have not been in contact, so here we have a rapprochement by intuition or emulation and we try to find common points. It is not a mere coincidence: Borges instinctively brings closer together Han Yu, a Chinese writer of the eighth century, Zeno and Kierkegaard, as precursors of Kafka. Doing this, he reveals the “literary utopia” of a writer dialoguing with the others.

There is a third halfway position, which we may call *the European position*. What is European comparatism? It stems from the idea that there are strong European convergences (which does not prevent differences) and that these convergences have to do directly with Europe, which will motivate—or justify—the choice of bold comparisons. The most important is the scope, the result of the comparison. A comparison is never impossible, but sometimes, it may not be useful (its results can be deceptive or minimal). About that, it is interesting to remember that Pierre Fontanier (1977), in *Figures of Discourse (Les Figures du discours)*, declares that three conditions are necessary for a good comparison. The first condition is its *relevance*. It should be right and true, “not in all relations of any kind, but in those that serve as its foundation”. It thus confers a moral criterion on a figure of speech on the one hand, and on the other, it attributes to the comparison a criterion of accuracy and relevance. The second condition is its *operational* dimension, “that the object from

which it is drawn should be better known than that which one wants to be better known” (*ibid.*). Fontanier makes the didactic virtue of the comparison one of its imperatives (limiting in fact the comparison to the field of the controllable). The third condition is its *stimulating* power:

It should present to the imagination something new, brilliant, interesting; nothing, therefore, low, abject, or even worn out or trivial. What is most desirable is that the findings be unexpected and striking as well as easily felt and perceived (*ibid.*).

In these words, an important notion is introduced, *i.e.* the imagination. For Ricœur (1986), the imagination is an innovative space of comparison, a place “where motives as heterogeneous as desires and ethical requirements, themselves as diverse as professional rules, social customs or strongly personal values, can be compared and measured”. An epistemological problem arises: how can we know that what we have drawn to light is or not a personal projection? Am I just seeing and projecting links between things that are unrelated? To raise people’s awareness of the person who compares, it would be appropriate to introduce myself as a *comparative researcher*, explaining who I am, where I came from, on what I work, why I chose comparison... It is important to understand the *nature* of what is interpreted. Is it cultural or social? Are these elements inherent in human nature?

I would like now to return to a central question in comparative literature: how do we build a corpus? The different kinds of corpus depend on the delimitation of it. The question of its limits is essential:

- 1) *Spatial limits*: all kind of limits need to be studied. Everything is a matter of limits. There are two types of corpus: open or close.
- 2) *Quantitative limits*: from how many common criteria can I establish links between works (does it take at least one, two, three...)? The answer to this question depends on what I want to show.
- 3) Is it the same thing to compare two or three elements? Can I always add an item to the corpus? Does it change anything? If it is still conceptually *possible* and even *recommended* (even from a strictly phantasmatic point of view), what are the consequences?

I can give the example of a corpus built around women emancipation to show what is produced by the addition of a supplementary text. A preliminary corpus is composed of the plays of Goldoni, Aristophane, Shakespeare, and Molière. From this corpus, I draw a certain number of elements: on the woman, her representation and her capacity (or not) to be

represented in a process of emancipation. I ask if this emancipation is an illusion, a parenthesis therefore a question of theatrical representation, or, on the contrary, something deeper, more transgressive and above all more extensive (with the liberation of women on stage foreshadowing or extrapolating social literature). Do we have a case of dramatic efficiency, some impact in real life, or is it just a reflection of the spirit of the times? We can notice that in this corpus, the authors are men. The corpus stops in the eighteenth century, and the female characters are married or end up getting married (with the recovery of what Bourdieu called *Masculine Domination—La Domination masculine*). They seek to free themselves but in the end they conform. However, we could add Ibsen's play, *Et Dukkehjem (A Doll's House)*: at the end of the play, Nora is leaving the family home. This modifies our conclusions, showing that there is indeed a chronological and geographical evolution in the transcription of this pattern. Now, if we add also a play by the Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek, *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte; oder Stützen der Gesellschaften (What Happened after Nora left Her Husband, 1979)*, this play changes our conclusions, because this writer (a woman) imagines what happened when Nora left her husband and her children. Jelinek is an author of the twentieth century and she locates her plot in 1930 in Germany, when the condition of women is situated in a specific political, social, and ideological context. She defends feminist claims and gives a feminist point of view about women's independence. Nora tries to be free, it is not easy, but she absolutely refuses to depend on a man. She does not need a husband anymore. It provides the conclusion for this theatrical corpus. If we choose the same subject with a different—for example a non-theatrical—corpus, the results may be changed. We can take a novel by a Swedish woman writer who frees the women: *Pengar (Silver)* by Ernst Ahlgren (*male pseudonym* of the feminine writer Victoria Benedictsson, a writer of the modern breakthrough that could be described as *feminist*). Selma leaves her husband at the end of the novel. So, the answer to this question “Are women free in literary productions?”, depends on the *number* of texts in the corpus, it depends on the authors and their sexual condition. We see that the *nature* of the corpus, the gender of the authors but also the genre of the texts modify the results of comparisons. Depending on many data, the conclusions are deeply relative and cannot be generalized without many precautions. It is important to see how the results obtained for each item can be transferred to the corpus (either individually or collectively).

From this, we can distinguish different kinds of corpus:

1) A *synchronous corpus*, which can be called “historical coincidences”. It means we work on *one time period* (the equivalent of a generation), for instance in a comparative study of the literary and historical repercussions of a historical or artistic event. In this case, we capture the moments of change, the signs of mutations to try to explain them. This is often the case for the study of artistic movements (romanticism, naturalism, symbolism...).

2) A *diachronic corpus*, which is characterized by “structural similarities”. We see the effects of a movement (or a theme) on another period, sometimes accompanied by a geographical displacement; these are called myth studies. I give one example: Hamlet, and particularly the play by Shakespeare who gave the story its mythical status. If we compare Saxo Grammaticus text and Shakespeare’s play, we notice several differences. Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish writer translated into Latin, he was the first who wrote about the Danish Prince. In his text, Hamlet was not melancholy; he did not commit suicide but died heroically on a battlefield. Shakespeare gave to Hamlet his hesitation, his inaction, the two visits of the ghost, the murder of his father by his uncle and his mother, he also added Ophelia and his enigmatic love for her. Our hypothesis is Shakespeare re-invented the Hamlet fiction by giving him “northern tropisms” that have made his success and gave the story its mythical dimension.

3) A *micro corpus*, characteristic of *endogenous comparatism*, where texts belong to the same sphere (geographic or artistic), a corpus strongly identified as unified (for example the Scandinavian countries, Russia, or Europe). For this, we have to take into consideration the analytical point of view, to identify from where the researcher analyzes. It is important to know where I compare so as to be aware of who I am, of my nationality, my anchor point, my culture, and finally of the risks, the limits, the dangers, the dead ends. In order for comparative epistemology to be valid, several conditions must be fulfilled and many dangers avoided. From the epistemological point of view, it is emphasized that the analytic point of view is also internal (with one advantage, an access to valid works and critical apparatus, and one disadvantage, a lack of distance). For my part, I advocate playing on both tables, a system of back and forth.

4) An *exogenous corpus*, corresponding to what we can call *macro-comparatism*. It is a study of the relations of a determined sphere with other spheres. This approach takes into account the effects of globalization. For example, when you want to compare Scandinavian countries with neighboring countries, they can be in Europe or in

countries geographically close (like Finland or Russia). The corpus can be more distant but always with reasons and logical explanations (to study the point of view of minorities).

To build a corpus, we must have some *comparative criteria*, which Guy Jucquois called “criteria of comparability” (1989, 45-76):

- 1) *The law of non-property*: the comparative researcher never has his own objects, but he *borrow*s them, in a way. The specificity of a comparative corpus is to bring together: it borrows the objects from other disciplines and fields because the comparative corpus is made up of works belonging to different countries, different cultures, it is made of temporary loans.
- 2) *The law of collective updating*: the fact of choosing several works makes the corpus a temporary space; in comparative literature, the object never exists *alone*, it must always be associated with others.
- 3) *The law of impermanence*: it is due to the fluctuation of corpora; the comparison corpus builds its fields of study (there are no preestablished corpora): the “comparative researcher produces what he deals with” said Pol Vandeveld (2005, 56).
- 4) *The humanist law* which is not peculiar to the elements compared, a characteristic common to the human sciences; it affirms the interdependence between comparing subject and objects compared; this interdependence is due to language. Literary works are based on words. There is a strong correlation between the analysis of the object and the consciousness of one’s own identity.

That’s why we cannot work in comparative literature without questioning what I call “the *comparing subject*” (Toudoire-Surlapierre 2009, 132). My identity as a researcher is in specific interaction with its object, but also with its community. The comparative researcher must have several characteristics: distancing of the subject from his objects; acceptance of his subjectivity; individual responsibility of the comparing subject; awareness of scientific doubt; the transfer to the subject of analyses and comparisons made. He creates an intersection between different areas, a kind of *third space* created by drawing on the others’ domain. The comparative researcher crosses different methods. But that is not easy and it raises several problems, because he can choose different possible critical disciplines: reception studies, translation studies, geocriticism, literary history, imagology, gender studies, post-colonial studies, myth studies... It is important to know where we are, however to know what we are going to

look for as a kind of result. The comparative researcher must have a united vision: even if the nature of the results can be very diverse, it requires consistency in what we seek (it is necessary to know it). Above all some criteria must be taken into account, such as what I call the effects of comparisons: the relevance and the legitimacy of the comparisons are reflected in the effects.

It is time now to map out what we will do in this book. First, we will endeavor to highlight “generic kinships between heterogeneous ideas” (Ricœur 1990, 169). It allows a parallel between two apprehensions of the world: the microcosm and the macrocosm. Comparative Literature is a “propædeutic of predictability”, to borrow Gilbert Simondon’s phrase. We are straining towards the discovery of a vision of networks organized as systems or in extension, which implies a quest for coherence that is not reifying (once and for all) but energetic and dynamic.

We would like this book to adopt a *theoretical position*, with each of the participants trying to make theoretical propositions. We believe it is important to show a “European comparative reflection in progress”. Each contribution will present what seems important and representative of comparative literature in his or her country. It means that there is a correlation between *comparison* and *nation* (or at least country, European territory) and the postulate is that Europe functions as a *macrocosm* which interacts with different *microcosms*, but comparative literature can also disprove this claim by the comparison of these microcosms. Here are the guidelines we proposed to follow:

- 1) Surveying the way we compare in Europe (but also why and how we compare) and identifying our assumptions, our respective knowledge, our methods, our concepts, our theories, as well as the cultural political, historical and media issues.
- 2) Answering the question: “do we have common trends (or not)?”
- 3) Observing whether it is opportune or even useful to constitute a scholarly community, or more precisely a European comparative community, in a time of globalization, and defining what this can bring us concretely and defining what it may tell us about Europe.

Translated from French by Michel Faure

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PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION

NIKOL DZIUB

The aim of the book is to offer a “peripherally centered” panorama of European comparative literature, its methods, its topics, its challenges, its perspectives. Thanks to the historical, theoretical, methodological and partially interdisciplinary dimensions of their papers, the contributors to the volume show how comparative literature works, both on an institutional and a practical level, in the country they come from or they work in; but they also try to define the characteristics of European comparative literature on a continental level. The editors invited not only representatives of countries where comparative literature is a major discipline, but also representatives of countries where it is an emerging discipline, to contribute to the book. From Switzerland to Ukraine by way of Ireland, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Austria or Romania, the book offers a large panorama, placing great emphasis on usually “invisible” countries. Moreover, the book relates both to the (postcolonial and post-Soviet) present and to the future of comparative literature: it is a handbook, but also a laboratory.

Comparative literature is a major discipline in European humanities. However, the discipline, which is relatively young, has manifested itself at different times in the different countries of the continent. Comparative literature is both a science and a laboratory of contemporary cultures, which promotes the cultural diversity and fecundity of Europe. The aim of the book will therefore be to propose an inventory of European comparative literature, but also to study its theoretical and practical features. That is why intercultural studies and national identities, world literature and regional specificities will be the keywords of the book. *Comparative Literature in Europe: Challenges and Perspectives* is organized theoretically rather than geographically, and is divided into four parts: Comparative Literature and Decoloniality; Comparative Literature and Cross-cultural Studies; Proximity and Distance: Comparative Literature and Translation; Comparative Practices and Perspectives. In addition to studies relating to comparative literature in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine, the

book also proposes a transnational comparative approach, crossing national borders and offering a global perspective on the discipline.

Comparative literature is “a discipline in crisis”, but it is also a discipline that acknowledges the legitimacy of “literature without borders” (Domínguez, Saussy and Villaneuva 2015, xv). It is a cross-cultural and a cross-border discipline which makes literary theory and practices more complex. Trying to develop new ways of comparing is a challenge; but it presupposes also that comparison distrusts globalization, nationalisms, schools, and habits. The aim of comparative literature is to create cross-border connections and communities. Comparative literature oscillates between two polar concepts (national literatures/world literature) that it tries to transcend by developing new notions, like regional literatures, ethnic literatures, migration literature, bilingual and multilingual literatures, or cross-border literatures. The studies we gathered show how comparative literature produces new ways of thinking and experiencing the “situations” of the countries the researchers we invited come from. Comparative literature appears to be both a pragmatic tool for “young” nations (see Andersen 1994 and Thiesse 1999) and an idealistic discipline transcended by a cross-border way of thinking. That is why we also wanted to reflect upon the pertinence of the notion of Europe in a comparative context.

But there were a lot of other geopolitical concepts we had to analyze. César Domínguez claims that though the debate on the crisis of Hispanism and the need of “New Hispanisms” has been focused on methodological issues, comparative literature has never been part of this debate. He engages the question of monoglossia which is the basis of New Hispanisms, and explains that in this context comparative literature would be unnecessary. But Domínguez, who thinks that Hispanism needs to be multilingual, stresses the role comparative literature, which is both a discipline and an ideology, could “play in current discussions on Hispanism”.

Ángela Fernandes, for her part, underlines the coherence of Portuguese comparative studies from Fidelino de Figueiredo’s essay *Pyrene. A Perspective Towards an Introduction to the Comparative History of Portuguese and Spanish Literatures* (*Pyrene. Ponto de vista para uma introdução à história comparada das literaturas portuguesa e espanhola*, 1935) to nowadays: the title of this seminal book “shows how the Iberian perspective has been instrumental in Portuguese literary and cultural studies, the transatlantic perspective being the other major movement when supranational readings are explored”.

Dialogue across countries is sometimes more difficult than the communication between “the center” and “the periphery” that is a result of each country’s relation to its geographical or cultural neighbors. “Regional” languages are even nowadays ignored when it concerns education. Brigitte Le Juez, whose study is entitled “Teaching and Researching Comparative Literature in a Post-Colonial and Bilingual Context: the Case of Ireland”, argues that comparative methods in Ireland are different from those used in Great-Britain, because of their linguistic, historical, and political basis. Le Juez focuses on the linguistic criterium which leads to Irish independence, and shows that the post-colonial approach is useful to understand Irish duality. Comparative studies reflect those ideological issues, English and Irish subjects being rarely studied together. Le Juez’s study proposes a broad view of the state of comparatism in Ireland from an “idiosyncratic perspective”, that of a nation “still unsure about some of its cultural markers (Gaelic, Anglophone, and more widely European).”

But is proximity an indispensable condition for successful comparisons? Irish and Ukrainian post-colonial comparatists, in any case, have things in common. Nikol Dziub, in her article entitled “Comparative Literature in Ukraine: Brotherhood and Periphery”, shows that comparative literature in Ukraine operates as a laboratory of literary theory, and that it also deals with questions that inform Ukrainian literature itself. Dziub concentrates on comparative concepts that could only emerge in postcolonial and post-Soviet contexts—starting with “Westernism”; and she shows that the development of the comparative tradition in a country like Ukraine depends on the ideological and political context rather than on the cultural environment. She argues that Ukrainian comparative literature responds to a need to rethink the concepts related to the notions of influence and contacts in order to make comparatism, if not a *modus vivendi*, at least an instrument at the service of an ethics of margins.

Westernism and Europeanism are key concepts in this book. In his study entitled “Comparing in Finland. A Method in a Moving Field”, Harri Veivo shows that the role of comparative literature in Finland has always been to promote European culture. The author claims that processes such as appropriation and resemantisation that “combine adaptation with resistance and creation are therefore perhaps more vital in the periphery than in the center”. He even asks if “comparing is surviving”.

In some countries, comparison is a way of life. As Michel Delville suggests in his article entitled “Belgian Comparatism at the Crossroads”, Belgium is considered as a “comparative space *par excellence* by virtue of

its historically and institutionally sanctioned multilingualism and multiculturalism". He argues that this is a particularity, but, even in this comparative space, Belgian chairs in comparative literature have "tended to disappear". When he points out the danger of this exclusion of the discipline from science, Delville notes that Belgian comparative literature's future depends on individual researchers' good will.

In her contribution, "Comparison in a Cross-Cultural Context. An Overview of Comparatism in Luxembourg", Jeanne Glesener, for her part, highlights the role of the comparative approach in research on literature in Luxembourg—Luxembourgish literature being a literature with a multilingual vocation, with texts in German, French, Luxembourgish, and English. The comparative approach seems to be essential to understand the specificity of the literature in Luxembourg. Comparative literature, with its new methods, not only facilitates the networking of small literatures throughout the world, it also provides research in literature with an innovative analytical framework and highly stimulating theoretical perspectives.

Comparative literature is the discipline of the in-between spaces. Sandra Vlasta explores the way comparative literature established itself in Austria: whereas "Innsbruck has traditionally been oriented towards the East (*i.e.*, Slavic languages)", and "has had a strong focus on theory", Vienna "has been more focused on social history studies of literature" and "has been oriented towards the Romance languages". Even though the definition of "comparison" is broad, Sandra Vlasta points out "different *foci* that, in the case of Vienna and Innsbruck, can be traced back to the founders of the departments."

Belgium, Luxembourg, and Austria are, or should be, essentially "comparative" countries. So is, or should be, Switzerland. Thomas Hunkeler entitled his study "Switzerland, the Ideal Republic of Comparative Literature?" He notices that it is surprising that comparative literature is a minor discipline in a plurilingual Switzerland. In view of the cultural situation torn between the so-called "national" literatures and the traditions marking the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of the country, comparatism should be omnipresent in Switzerland. Hunkeler argues that "comparative literature is the place in which we learn, through comparison, to intellectually profit not only from the differences between languages, literatures and cultures", but also "from all the obstacles that arise when we compare different literatures." He is convinced that comparative literature might be "the school in which we learn to deal with these obstacles."

But comparative literature also studies the relationship between the

“one” and the “system”. In her paper, “National Literature Gone Comparative—Mobility Challenges in Romanian Studies”, Mihaela Ursa demonstrates that there was a translational turn in Romanian literary studies which altered their traditional relation to comparative literature. As for most European cultures during the nineteenth century, establishing a national body of literature was not just a literary matter in Romania, but part of the nation-building project. For the last decades however, “a clear transnational trend has altered the cultural priorities of the East-European countries, and Romania makes no exception.” After a boom in translations during the 1990s, Romanian literature is redefining itself nowadays alongside the lines of a literature-in-translation. That is why comparative studies in Romania have to “focus on the renegotiations of cultural heterogeneity and cultural border-crossing, as well as on shared and translated spaces”.

In “Comparative Literature in Estonia: Towards a Symbiotic Approach”, Katre Talviste argues that a comparative approach is inherent in the Estonian literary tradition, which has stemmed from a historically multilingual and multicultural environment, the national literature and its reception having grown out of constant interactions with other literary traditions. While it is, to a degree, a valid and natural effort to establish a dialogue and to situate Estonian literature within a larger context, it can sometimes result in tunnel vision, which today’s scholarship is attempting to counterbalance in various ways. Talviste also discusses the advantages and challenges resulting from the comparatist tradition in the field of literary pedagogy, giving a brief overview of the pedagogical tradition and of the efforts to adapt it to current educational needs.

In Lithuania, the challenges of comparative literary studies are slightly different. Ausra Jurgutienė, in her study entitled “Comparison in Lithuania: Traditional and New Ideas”, explains that Lithuanian comparative literature may be defined in two ways: not only as an “inseparable component of the historical approach”, but also as a “new trend in literary research focused on influences, recurring subjects, and genres”. Lithuanian comparative literature has a complex history: in Soviet Lithuania, comparative studies had to be judgmental, and to praise the “great literature” of Russia. But “the Western mentality that had formed during the interwar period emerged again [...] when the Soviet era was coming to an end”.

As Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek suggests, “the notion of Central European culture—real or imagined—(is) defined as an in-between peripheral and (post)colonial space” (2002, 1). And comparative literature is one of the most efficient tools to try to understand how this space works.

In “The Search for a Method in Slovak Comparative Literary Studies”, Róbert Gáfrik demonstrates that comparative literary studies in Slovakia began in the 1940s, when the first generation of Slovak literary scholars “created the conditions for the study of Slovak literature in relation to other literatures”. Gáfrik’s article analyses the “birth” of Slovak comparative literary studies and delineates the place of Ďurišin’s theoretical work in it in order to provide an overview of the development and state of the discipline in the past twenty years.

But what does “comparison” mean outside the “classical European tradition”? In her article entitled “Comparative Literature—Academic Discipline or/and Intellectual *Modus Vivendi*: From a Macedonian Standpoint”, Sonja Stojmenska-Elzeser reconsiders the enigmatic concepts of Europeanness, the European imaginary, Eurocentrism, European cultural regions, and European urban identity. She tries to show what could be an ethical approach to comparatism, and explains the special meaning of comparative literature’s *ethos* for cultures such as Macedonian.

In a more figurative perspective, Ewa Łukaszyk portrays comparative literature in Poland as “the Mole Reads the World”, insisting on its “paradoxes”. She considers that Polish scholars are “suspended between the longing for great universalist horizons and a peculiar world blindness, allegedly imposed by the political situation in the past and [...] self-inflicted in the present”. This paradoxical characterization may be resumed in the metaphor of a mole in the great theatre of the world, used by Czesław Miłosz. The bright lights of the spectacle appear as distant and confusing to his earthly animals: the mole, the hamster, and the hedgehog. Coming close to the tiny wet muzzles, one might nonetheless overhear what they say about the sounds of the music and the movements of the ballet. Using this as a metaphor for the situation of comparative literature in Poland is certainly a very severe judgement of this academic reality. While doing this, Ewa Łukaszyk expects to arrive at some generalizable conclusions on the importance of comparative literature as a strategy, not only of reading, but also of intellectual survival in peripheral contexts. And that is precisely one of the main aims of this volume—to show that comparative literature is more than a discipline: it is a way of thinking, if not a way of life.

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PART I
Comparative Literature
and Decoloniality

CHAPTER ONE

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND NEW HISPANISMS

CÉSAR DOMÍNGUEZ

In a monograph whose focus is comparing the different ways in which comparative literature is practised in Europe, one should wonder whether there is some relationship between, on one hand, the way comparative literature is practised in every European country and, on the other hand, the role attributed to the literary works of a single country within European literature. In the first textbook of comparative literature for mainstream histories of the discipline, Paul Van Tieghem (1946, 138) placed the study of influences “at the heart of comparative literary studies” (“au cœur des études de littérature comparée”). This relevance does not seem unrelated to the central role performed by French literature, as is insistently claimed even in recent textbooks with a European scope. Charles Dédéyan (1998, 123), for example, states that “since the *Chanson de Roland*, France has left her mark in European literature” (“la France a marqué de son empreinte, dès la *Chanson de Roland*, les Lettres européennes”). Conversely, in the first textbook of comparative literature for a Spanish-speaking audience, the Romanian-born professor of the University of La Laguna Alejandro Cioranescu (born Alexandru Ciorănescu) advocated a more nuanced discussion of influence than previous conceptualisations in order to explain, for example, that “French writers may have adopted this character [the rural gentleman] out of the blue, and hence it is not possible to trace its origin” (“los autores franceses pueden haberlo tomado [el hidalgo campesino] [...] del aire, sin que resulte posible remontar hasta el modelo”; 1964/2006, 150), in spite of being this character typical of Spanish literature. This more nuanced approach may be due to the changing role of Spanish literature within European literature, which Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1998, 161) describes as “one of the major characteristics of Iberian cultures” (“une des originalités majeures des cultures ibériques”), “their episodic, problematic, even controversial membership to the European space” (“leur appartenance épisodique, problématique, voire conflictuelle à l’espace européen”).

A complementary direction of research on the different ways comparative literature is practised across Europe involves determining under which linguistic culture literary works are categorised. Harold F. Schiffman (1996, 5) has defined “linguistic culture” as the

set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language.

By drawing on this definition, José del Valle (2000) opposes the linguistic culture of monoglossia to the one of heteroglossia. The former dominates ideas about language in Western society and consists of two principles, namely, the principle of focalization and the principle of convergence.

The *principle of focalization* reflects the idea that speaking always entails using a grammar, understood as a well-defined and minimally variable system; unfocused or highly variable linguistic behaviors are thus stigmatized in linguistic communities where monoglossic culture is dominant. The *principle of convergence*, which is the diachronic counterpart of focalization, assumes that the verbal behavior of the member of a community tends to become more and more homogeneous with time. Multilingualism is assumed to slowly disappear as people acquire the dominant language, and dialectal variation is believed to decrease as the educational system spreads the dominant variety. (Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002a, 10)

In its literary counterpart, one may understand why, for example, there does not exist a single comparative history of literature in Italy, where a linguistic culture of monoglossia is dominant and, hence, languages other than standard Italian, along with literature in these languages, are stigmatised as *dialectal* according to the principle of focalisation, and are eliminated from the comparative purview. Likewise, the dominant linguistic culture of monoglossia in France results in the stigmatisation, in accordance with the principle of convergence, of the so-called “regional literatures” (“littératures régionales”) within what Jean-Paul Barbe (1998, 196) calls “the French space proper, with its exceptionality due to Paris’ hypertrophy” (“l’espace français proprement dit, dans son exceptionnalité, due à l’hypertrophie de sa capitale”). A further telling example, which this time applies to literature in the United Kingdom, encapsulates different understandings of comparative literature as dependent on linguistic cultures of monoglossia and heteroglossia, respectively. In the Preface to Chapter 3, “Comparing the Literatures of the British Isles”, Susan Bassnett

(1993, 48) tells about her encounter with the late Slovak comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin:

Some years ago, on a visit to the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, I was asked by the well-known Slovak comparatist, Dionýz Ďurišin, to give him the names of colleagues in Britain working on British Comparative Literature. Having been a founding member of the British Comparative Literature Association, and being its treasurer at the time, I felt I had a sound sense of who was working on what, so I duly provided him with a list of names of colleagues in French, German and English departments and the few specifically designated Comparative Literature programmes. He appeared perplexed by this, and repeated his request for names of colleagues working on British Comparative Literature. I assured him the names I had given him were a representative cross section. He pointed out politely that they were all scholars in French, German or English. I repeated that they were our best-known comparatists. We looked at one another across our cups of coffee in bafflement...

It took several minutes before it dawned on me what he was asking me for. He simply wanted to know who was comparing the literatures of the British Isles, for that seemed to him and his colleagues to be the proper business of British comparatists.

Though both directions—the link between ways of practising comparative literature and imagological values attributed to national literatures on one hand, and the link between ways of practising comparative literature and linguistic cultures under which literary works are categorised on the other—are interrelated, in this essay I will focus on the second direction due to the constraint of space. The essay is divided into two parts. First, I will discuss the role comparative literature may play in current discussions on Hispanism as both discipline and ideology. Second, I will present a case study on migrant writing in a peripheral Spanish language, which illuminates some of the problems discussed in the first part. Finally, some concluding remarks will follow.

1. The double monoglossia of Hispanism

A recent survey on the state of Hispanism (a true genre in itself) is organised into two volumes, tellingly titled *Debating Hispanic Studies: Reflections on Our Disciplines* and *Estudios Hispánicos: Perspectivas Internacionales* (Martín Estudillo, Ocampo and Spadaccini 2006 and 2007). I say “tellingly” because one would expect to find discussions on the discipline as practised in Spain in Volume 1 (“our disciplines”) and practices in other locations in Volume 2 (“international perspectives”).

Volume 1, however, addresses “the state of our disciplines within the American university” (Epps 2006, 15), whereas Volume 2 includes contributions on Hispanism as practised in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Argentina, and Canada. This distribution points, on one hand, to the foundational European inception of the idea of “Spanish literature” (the “exogenous point of view” on national literary history, as Cabo Aseguinolaza (2010, 2) has called it), and, on the other hand, to the international frame of the discipline in which the US occupies a prominent place. Interestingly, neither the US nor Spain are alien to a diagnosis of crisis. In the US, Peninsular department sections have been (and still are) accused of being “out of touch with the pressing realities of our world” (Castillo and Egginton 2006, 51), whereas in Spain the leading Hispanist José María Pozuelo Yvancos (2003, 6) agrees on the existence of a disciplinary crisis, which, nonetheless, may be a solution—a new opportunity for providing Hispanism with new methods.

Two cautions need to be raised before proceeding with the dominant linguistic culture of Hispanism. First, Hispanism may be understood either as comprising only Peninsularism, as in the aforementioned accusation of being out of touch with reality, in contrast to Latinamericanism, which would suffer less from this kind of resistance (Castillo and Egginton 2006, 51), or as comprising both Peninsularism and Latinamericanism and, hence, making reference to “a once and future intellectual, cultural, and maybe even political community, some great pan-Hispanic or pan-Hispanophilic collectivity” (Epps 2006, 19). Second, the disciplinary crisis is commonly understood as resistance to theory regardless of the discipline’s location, a resistance to theory which is equated to a resistance to modernity. “The history of Hispanic literary criticism since the late eighteenth century [...] can [...] be understood”, claims Carlos J. Alonso (1996, 148), “as being generated by the simultaneous and contradictory action of two movements, towards and away from theory, towards and away from modernity”. A key issue here is, as Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza (2007, 82) warns, the universality and cosmopolitanism predicated on the theory in question, in contrast to which all other theories are particular and parochial.

What I want to stress here is that comparative literature is absent from the list of new models of critical theory resisted by Hispanism, a list that comprises deconstructionism, feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies. Does this absence mean that comparative literature is resisted on an equal footing with the aforementioned models? The answer is no. Whereas Hispanism shows resistance to the list of new models due to its being philology-oriented and bound to a past- and elitist-oriented canon,

comparative literature is simply non-existent due to the linguistic culture of monoglossia upon which Hispanism is constructed.

As I said before, Hispanism is both a discipline and an ideology, whether understood as the sum of Peninsularism and Latinamericanism or not. According to José del Valle and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman (2002a, 6; emphasis in the original), Hispanism as an ideology consists of the following ideas:

The existence of a unique Spanish culture, lifestyle, characteristics, traditions and values, *all of them embodied in its language*; the idea that Spanish American culture is nothing but Spanish culture transplanted to the New World; and the notion that Hispanic culture has an internal hierarchy in which Spain occupies a hegemonic position.

As a result of being a language-based ideology, Hispanism *qua* discipline translates into practice “the idea that the Spanish language is the ultimate embodiment of the Hispanic community and the safest guarantor of its preservation” (Valle and Stheeman 2002b, 194).

Joan Ramon Resina (2009, 29) has described Hispanism, both as discipline and ideology, as “postimperial cultural nationalism” (“nacionalismo cultural posimperial”). In contrast to the abundance of literature on the regional varieties of Hispanism, including the genre of Hispanists’ hagiography, there does not exist a single history of the discipline with a global scope focused on methodology. Whether such a history will ever be written or not, a key chapter should address the transformation of Spanish peripheries into internal “colonies” after the loss of Cuba and the cession of Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam to the US in 1898, as encapsulated in Resina’s phrase. The linguistic translation of such a transformation was implemented by the Royal Decree of 21 November 1902, which made “Spanish-Castilian”¹ the only official language in schools in Spain:

¹ Some words regarding my use of “Spanish-Castilian” are in order. The language spoken in Spain, Latin America, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, and other places is commonly known as *español*, Spanish. *Castellano*, Castilian, in turn, is defined by the Royal Academy dictionary as “Spanish language, especially when one wants to differentiate it from other vernacular languages in Spain” (“lengua española, especialmente cuando se quiere distinguir de alguna otra lengua vernácula de España”). “Spanish-Castilian” signifies, therefore, this latter definition.

Primary education teachers who teach the Christian doctrine or any other subject in a language or dialect different from Spanish-Castilian will be admonished the first time by the primary education provincial inspector, who will provide an account to the Ministry in question; if they repeat this kind of behaviour, they will not be allowed to teach again and lose all the rights established by law.²

Article 2 of the Decree is clear about the “spiritual” bond between the official national language and Catholicism, another tenet of Hispanism as ideology which the Preamble to the Decree makes clear for both sides of the Atlantic for being the “Cervantes’ language” (“idioma de Cervantes”) as well as “the language whereby our faith and our civilization were spread in the New World” (“que nos sirvió en el Nuevo Mundo para propagar nuestra fe y nuestra civilización”; Real Decreto 1902, 663). The loss of the last colonies in Spanish America only four years earlier and the emerging peripheral nationalisms with their own languages resulted in the centripetal role attributed to Spanish-Castilian as a way of avoiding the danger of national disintegration:

Teaching the Christian doctrine in a language different from Spanish-Castilian would result in a deplorable ignorance of the national language, damaging the high interests of the country, which have in the language the most esteemed bond of union between all the provinces of the kingdom.³

² All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. “Los Maestros y Maestras de instrucción primaria que enseñasen a sus discípulos la doctrina cristiana u otra cualquiera materia en un idioma o dialecto que no sea la lengua castellana, serán castigados por primera vez con amonestación por parte del Inspector provincial de primera enseñanza, quien dará cuenta del hecho al Ministerio del ramo; y si reincidiesen, después de haber sufrido una amonestación, serán separados del Magisterio oficial, perdiendo cuantos derechos les reconoce la ley” (Real Decreto 1902, 664; Art. 2). Notice that this decree was passed during the so-called “constitutional period” of Alfonso XIII’s reign (1902-1923).

³ “La enseñanza de la doctrina cristiana en lengua distinta que el castellano [...] habría de redundar forzosamente en lamentable desconocimiento del idioma nacional”, the Royal Decree (1902, 663; emphasis added) claims, “con grave daño de los altos intereses de la Patria, que en la lengua tienen su más preciado vínculo de unión entre *todas las provincias del Reino*”. Such kind of arguments are still in use by what one can call the “negationists” or “historical revisionists”. José Antonio Sánchez Domínguez, president of the Spanish Radio and Television Corporation, claimed in his lecture at Casa de América on March 30th, 2017, that Spain “was not a colonising power but an evangelising one” (“no fue colonizadora sino evangelizadora”) in the conquest of America, and compared the Aztec empire with Nazism. Historical revisionism is practised in academia as well. A telling

Less than one month later, the leading Hispanist Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1902, 1), who determined the history of Hispanism during the twentieth century, intervened by supporting the need of a state that “must ensure the necessary union” (“debe velar por la necesaria unidad”) against a “infinitesimal subdivision” (“subdivisión [...] infinitesimal”) along the lines of the French model, so that bilingualism would be restricted to areas with a language other than Spanish-Castilian, whose language, in turn, would be scientifically studied only at universities. Interestingly, the principles of the 1902 Decree were reinforced by the 1931 Constitution, while Menéndez Pidal’s ideas about bilingualism were reinforced by the 1978 Constitution.

In short, Hispanism *qua* Peninsularism, regardless of its location, is based upon a linguistic culture of monoglossia. According to Valle’s principle of focalisation, Spanish is identified with Spanish-Castilian as defined by the Spanish Royal Academy, a Peninsular, centripetal linguistic standard despite the global distribution of Spanish, which, in turn, is used as an argument against the need of peripheral Iberian languages.⁴ And according to Valle’s principle of convergence, both multilingualism and dialectal variation are prone to disappear and, hence, become relics of interest only for university research at best. This monoglossic understanding of Hispanism is blatant in a recent textbook on the discipline aimed at university students. “The most important language for Hispanic Studies is”, the editor claims, “Spanish” (Davies 2002/2014, 3). What about Hispanism *qua* Latinamericanism? The same principle of monoglossia applies for both Iberian and Amerindian languages in Latin America in the aforementioned textbook (*ibidem*). But, as

example is María Elvira Roca Barea’s 2016 book, in which she claims that attacks against the Spanish Empire, as all “empire phobias”, are “a kind of racist prejudice *from the bottom up*, identical in essence to racism *from the top down*, but better disguised, for it is accompanied by an intellectual entourage that makes up its true nature and justifies its truth claims” (“una clase de prejuicio racista *hacia arriba*, idéntico en esencia al racismo *hacia abajo*, pero mucho mejor disimulado, porque va acompañado de un cortejo intelectual que maquilla su verdadera naturaleza y justifica su pretensión de verdad”; Roca Barea 2017, 31; emphasis in the original).

⁴ “Catalan people, if they want to get into contact with the wider world, may do it by speaking one of the languages of greater diffusion in the world besides their own language” (“El pueblo catalán, si quiere relacionarse con el mundo, lo consigue hablando, además de su idioma propio, otro de los que más difusión tienen en el globo”; Menéndez Pidal 1902, 1). Again, this kind of arguments is still used today.

Latinamericanism proudly voices its progressivism against the conservatism of Peninsularism, it is worth quoting from a Latinamericanist. “Our academic training”, Sophia A. McClennen (2002) claims, “rarely provides opportunities for students and scholars to gain even a minimal proficiency in indigenous languages and too few programs offer Portuguese”. McClennen’s explanation for such situation—“the hegemony of Spanish in US Latin American Studies”—is more a post-factum description than an actual reason, which should be related to the construction of the modern Latin American nation-state on the assumption “of the inadequate or anachronistic character of indigenous life and culture” (Beverley 2011, 59). This is the double monoglossia of Hispanism, which is at the roots of the absence of comparative literature within the discipline.

2. Does Hispanism need to be multilingual?

Hispanism is not the only language-based discipline that defines an Iberian language—Spanish-Castilian—according to a linguistic culture of monoglossia. The same applies to Basque, Catalan and Galician studies.⁵ For the aims of this essay, however, I will deal exclusively with monoglossic Hispanism, though my analysis might be extended to the other Iberian language-based disciplines.

The work I selected for my case study is *Laila*, the first “novel” by the Moroccan-born writer Laila Karrouch. Besides the intrinsic qualities of the text, a Hispanist may become interested in it for two additional reasons. First, the novel is by a 1.5-generation migrant writer who has (allegedly) adopted Spanish-Castilian as her literary language. And, second, it has become a sort of canonical work, at least within the education system, in which it is compulsory reading in primary schools and high schools. The novel was published in 2010 by the publishing house Oxford within the series “The Tree of Reading” (“El árbol de la lectura”) and bibliographically described as “Realism” (“Realismo”) and “Social Reality” (“Realidad social”). Furthermore, some didactic materials have been developed, such as the *Cuaderno para el desarrollo lector* (Oxford Educación 2010), one of whose activities consists in that students search

⁵ “The equation language = nation on which these battling nationalist movements (Basque, Catalan, Galician and Spanish) rest is a synthetic formulation of the dominant linguistic culture of modern times: the linguistic culture of monoglossia” (Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002a, 10).

for information about *hiyab*, *burka*, *niqab*, *shayla*, and *chador*. One of the key paratextual elements selected by Oxford University Press, a leading publishing house in the Spanish education system at the moment, is the cover image, which leads the reader to identify the girl who wears a *niqab* with the main character, Laila. The author's biography, which is included at the end of the book, leads the reader, in turn, to identify the main character with the writer, as they both share the same name (hence, the text may be read alternatively as either fiction or not).

Paratexts are of crucial importance in this work. The July 2010 edition by Oxford University Press informs the reader that this is the first edition, that the writer is called Laila Karrouch, that the work is entitled *Laila*, and that the year of the copyright is 2004. Most probably, a common reader will not pay attention to these data. But, to what does the year 2004 make reference? The ISBN database does not include any entry for a book called *Laila* published in 2004. However, if searched by the author, the database retrieves a book entitled *De Nador a Vic* published in Catalan in 2004.

It is at this point where the task of the monoglossic and monolingual Hispanist would stop, whereas a bilingual comparatist would proceed to compare both works and realise that they tell (*virtually*) the same story—Laila's migration from Morocco to Spain. As *De Nador a Vic* was published in Catalan in 2004, what is the Spanish-Castilian 2010 *Laila*, an original or a pseudo-original⁶? If an original, Karrouch would be a bilingual (in Catalan and Spanish-Castilian) and a bi-literary writer who has sequentially produced two "identical" works, but in two different languages. If a pseudo-original, *Laila* would be a target-oriented imitative text, which the reader could consider as an original despite being a translation.

Both the paratextual information of the Spanish-Castilian edition and the ISBN database support a reading of *Laila* as an original, and yet *Laila* is the Spanish-Castilian translation of a 2004 original in Catalan. The lack of information regarding the translator leads to two working hypotheses—either Karrouch herself is the translator, or the translator is someone else. Karrouch (personal communication) informed me that the translation from Catalan into Spanish-Castilian had been commissioned by the publishing house and that the identity of the translator is unknown to her.

⁶ I coin the term "pseudo-original" upon what translation theory calls "pseudotranslation": "a target-oriented practice of imitative composition which results in texts that are perceived as translations but which are not, as they usually lack an actual source text" (Rambelli 1998/2011, 208-209).

This is not a minor issue inasmuch as a comparison between the source and the target texts shows that the latter has been subjected to extensive changes besides the change of title. Whereas the text in Catalan tells the story of a girl named Laila who migrates from Nador to Vic and adapts to the bilingual context of Catalonia, the text in Spanish-Castilian eliminates any reference to Catalonia to tell the story of a girl named Laila who migrates from Nador to an unnamed monolingual place somewhere in Spanish-Castilian-speaking Spain. Whereas Chapter 3 in the Catalan text is titled “The City of Vic” (“La ciutat de Vic”), in the Spanish-Castilian text the title is simply “The City” (“La ciudad”), and the school Jaume Balmes in Vic is simply “Going to School” (“Voy a la escuela”). In *De Nador a Vic*, Laila learns that “in Catalonia, Catalan is more used than Spanish-Castilian. What a departure! I have to learn two languages rather than one” (“a Catalunya als col·legis es parlava més el català que no pas el castellà. Novetat per a mi! Ara resultava que havia d’aprendre dos idiomes i no un”; Karrass 2004/2009, 41), while in *Laila* she has to learn only one language (Spanish-Castilian) and, hence, “in the end, I was more worried about other issues rather than language” (“en el fondo, el asunto del idioma no me preocupaba tanto como otras cosas”; Karrass 2010, 40). Finally, and to conclude this short comparative overview, whereas in *De Nador a Vic* “learning both Catalan and Spanish-Castilian and integration became more difficult, mixing started to decrease, and groups of either foreigners or Catalan and Spanish people were created” (“l’aprenentatge del català i el castellà i la integració en general es van fer més difícils, i la mescladissa de gent va començar a disminuir, i a l’escola és formaven, sovint, grupets d’estrangers i grupets de catalans i castellans”; Karrass 2004/2009, 109), in *Laila* “learning the language and integration became more difficult, mixing started to decrease, and groups of either foreigners or Spanish people were created” (“el aprendizaje de la lengua y la integración en general se fueron haciendo más difíciles, y la gente empezó a mezclarse menos; en la escuela a menudo se formaban grupitos de extranjeros y grupitos de españoles”; Karrass 2010, 112-113).

According to the *Cuaderno para el desarrollo lector* (Oxford Educación 2010, 2), *Laila* provides readers with an understanding of “the cultural clashes experienced by someone who moves to another city or country” (“los choques culturales que vive alguien que se muda de ciudad o país”) and the need to respect other cultures. A comparative analysis, however, shows that these aims require eliminating the internal Other, an operation that the monolingual Spanish-speaking reader cannot be aware of.

3. Concluding remarks

For a long time, Hispanism has considered that both the worldwide number of speakers of Spanish-Castilian and the increasing number of students of Spanish-Castilian as a foreign language confirm the vitality of the discipline. Repeated claims about the crisis of Hispanism, however, show the futility of such speculation. As José María Pozuelo Yvancos (2003, 7) has acutely pointed out, “the good health of Spanish-Castilian as a language can be perfectly parallel to the bad health of Hispanism as discourse” (“excelente salud del español como lengua puede ser perfectamente paralela a la mala salud del Hispanismo como discurso”). Attempts at solving such the crisis of Hispanism have found in methodology both the problem—the resistance to theory—and the solution—a theoretical updating, which is understood during the last decades as the adoption of critical trends from English-speaking academia, excluding comparative literature. Joan Resina (2009, 159), for example, advocates a paradigm shift from Hispanism to Iberian studies, which should recover “traditions that have been excluded, relationships that have been distorted, and academic spaces that exist, at best, in the cracks of the curriculum plaster and between departmental walls” (“tradiciones que han sido excluidas, relaciones que han sido distorsionadas, y espacios académicos que existen, en el mejor de los casos, en las grietas del enlucido curricular y entre tabiques departamentales”). Though this may very well be a description of the field of comparative literature, Resina calls it a “federal proposal” (“propuesta federativa”), which, I should add, does not make reference to a literary discipline (there does not exist such thing as “federal literary studies”) but to a kind of polity. In the most recent discussion on Hispanism, in turn, the “new” methods that need to be taken into consideration are literary geography, cultural studies and reception studies (Pérez Isasi *et al.* 2017, 2).

Such a solution—theoretical updating—overlooks two interrelated key issues. First, there does exist theory in Spanish-Castilian, a locally inflected theory whose aims and interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the theory predicated on universal and cosmopolitan. Second, such a theory is written in Spanish-Castilian, which, unlike French in the 1960s and 1970s and English from the 1980s onwards, is not a language for theory *qua* institution for the time being (Pozuelo Yvancos 2003, 7⁷).

⁷ “Make no mistake, the good state of teaching of Spanish, which is due to the incidental interest in the economic potential of Latin America, does not necessarily mean a greater diffusion of high-level studies on Spanish culture” (“El buen estado

My argument for the need of comparative literature within Hispanism is initially unrelated to either a theoretical updating (comparative literature, after all, is also said to be in crisis since the late 1950s, also due to methodological issues) or as a kind of reading to be applied to several literary cultures, as advocated by Antonio Monegal (2005) and Enric Bou (2010), though both aims are obviously part and parcel of any attempt at a comparative Hispanism. My argument points to a prior more vital step, namely, an understanding of Spanish-Castilian no longer as a *national* language (Spanish), but as a *plurinational* language, both across the countries that share Spanish-Castilian, in which the latter is in contact with other languages, and across the Spanish state, in which Basque, Catalan and Galician (the list is not meant to be exhaustive) are *Spanish* languages on an equal footing with Spanish-Castilian. This claim leads to a heteroglossic redefinition of Hispanism, no longer restricted to Peninsularism and Latinamericanism⁸, along the following lines: Hispanism is the study of the cultural manifestations of those communities in which any language of both the present-day Spanish state and previous polities has played and/or plays a significant role. As of these languages it is Spanish-Castilian the one in which a convergence of the “linguistic culture of monoglossia and the dogma of homogeneity” (Valle and Steehman 2002a, 11) has materialised, both inside and outside the Iberian Peninsula, by forcing other languages and other varieties of Spanish-Castilian to the margins, to a subaltern status, a postimperial/postcolonial approach is in order. Hispanism is not the only discipline entitled to analyse these cultural manifestations. For other language-based disciplines, such manifestations are a research field in its own right, and the disentanglement of the linguistic culture of monoglossia and the dogma of homogeneity is an equally pressing need. Due to the different

de la enseñanza del español que, no nos engañemos, responde en gran medida al interés circunstancial por el potencial económico de Hispanoamérica, no significa necesariamente una mayor difusión de unos estudios de alto nivel sobre la cultura española”; Cornejo Parriego and Villamandos 2011, 11).

⁸ “At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, one cannot go on speaking of ‘contemporary Hispanism’ without taking into consideration, among other possibilities, Equatorial Guinea’s production, which needs to be considered in its triple context of national literature, African literature and within Hispanism” (“A punto de cumplir la primera década del siglo XXI [...], no se puede seguir hablando de ‘hispanismo contemporáneo’ sin tener en cuenta, entre otras, la producción de Guinea Ecuatorial que debe ser considerada en su triple contexto de literatura nacional, literatura africana y dentro del hispanismo”; Bermúdez 2011, 64).

cultural, political and social contexts in which these languages have been or are used, Hispanism has neither a privileged centre nor a linguistic essence. This does not imply, however, that hierarchical structures had not been projected onto the network, as the former definition of Hispanism shows very well. The methodological correlative for the study of these manifestations as materialised in literature is comparative literature, provided the latter is not understood as a supplementary dimension to be added to the national, but as research on processual connections for which any delimitations are tentative. In such *new* Hispanism, Spanish comparative literature would cease to be an issue of misunderstanding, as was the case with British comparative literature in Bassnett and Đurišin's interview, but a subfield of research in its own right and, in turn, a testing ground for other comparative heteroglossic approaches to multilingualism and cultural diversity in Europe.

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CHAPTER TWO

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN PORTUGAL: THE IBERIAN AND THE ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES

ÂNGELA FERNANDES

Published in 1935, Fidelino de Figueiredo's essay *Pyrene. A Perspective Towards an Introduction to the Comparative History of Portuguese and Spanish Literatures* [*Pyrene. Ponto de vista para uma introdução à história comparada das literaturas portuguesa e espanhola*] constitutes one of the earliest studies explicitly oriented by a comparative approach to be published in Portugal. The essay's title shows how the Iberian perspective was instrumental in early twentieth century Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies, in close connection with the Romance and the European backgrounds. Since then, the transatlantic perspective became the other major movement when supranational readings came to be explored more systematically. In this paper, I aim at offering a critical commentary of these perspectives, sketching a brief history and also an overview of the current state of the field of Comparative Literature and Comparative Studies in Portugal. I will argue that the memory of the seminal texts of the field may provide some insights into the main lines followed during the twentieth century and may thus help us understand some key-issues worth dealing with in early twenty-first century Comparative Studies.

1. The contemporary scenario

If we consider the contemporary Portuguese institutional and academic panorama, there are a few major elements that highlight Comparative Studies as a prominent area of study and research. First, we easily come across a scholarly association, *APLC—Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*¹ (Portuguese Comparative Literature Association)

¹ See <http://aplc.org.pt/> (last accessed 30 May 2018).

and its scientific journal *Dedalus*. The association was created in 1987, and the journal is published since 1991. Actually, *Dedalus* was previously a Bulletin, set up in 1988, and in its very first editorial, Maria Alzira Seixo (1988-1989, 9²), the first president of *APLC*, stated the association aimed at opening a “new scientific and institutional path” for literary scholars in Portugal, bearing in mind that the field of Literary Studies was broadening its scope, embracing “literary history and theory, poetics and translation, methodology and textual pragmatics”. The association has kept this target of being a forum for multiple perspectives in literary research, as may be seen in the programme of the several conferences organized or sponsored by *APLC* so far. The most recent one has been the *EJICOMP* conference, the first meeting of “young researchers” in Comparative Literature, which gathered graduate students and post-doctoral researchers at the University of Lisbon in September 2017.³ Being a key-note speaker in this 2017 conference, Maria Alzira Seixo repeated the words she had used to close her 1988 editorial⁴, and reaffirmed: “Comparative Literature is literature as a whole, and encompasses all that literature may be in connection with.”

Along with this scholarly association, which in the early 1990s played an instrumental role in the institutionalization of the field in Portugal, several MA and PhD seminars and programmes in Comparative Literature were then created. So far, several dozens of Graduate degrees in Comparative Literature or Comparative Studies have been granted by Portuguese Universities.⁵ In 2015, the International PhD Programme in Comparative Studies (PhD-COMP), involving the University of Lisbon, the University of Bologna and KULeuven, was created with funding granted by FCT, the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology,

² My translation, as in all other occasions throughout the article. The Portuguese text states: “A A.P.L.C. que com a sua fundação inaugura um caminho novo para o percurso científico e institucional dos estudiosos da literatura, [...] entende-se como o lugar de convergência dos múltiplos domínios por onde hoje em dia se alargam os estudos consagrados à actividade literária, da história à teoria, da poética à tradução, da metodologia às pragmáticas do texto.”

³ The programme of the first *EJICOMP—Encontro de Jovens Investigadores em Literatura Comparada* is available online: <http://www.ejicomp.com/programa-edicao2017.html> (last accessed 30 May 2018).

⁴ “Porque a literatura comparada é, afinal, a literatura toda.”

⁵ In May 2018, the Open Access Portuguese Scientific Repository (*RCAAP—Repositório Científico de Acesso Aberto de Portugal*): <https://www.rcaap.pt/>, last accessed 30 May 2018) indicated that 201 Master Theses and 96 Doctoral Theses on Comparative Literature or Comparative Studies had been successfully defended at Portuguese Universities since 2006.

and has been offering five scholarships each academic year.⁶ Also in 2015, a BA course in Comparative Studies was established at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon.

Another extremely important element in this scenario are the two research centers we may find at the Universities of Lisbon and Porto: the Centro de Estudos Comparatistas/Center for Comparative Studies (Lisbon) and the Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa/Institute for Comparative Literature Margarida Losa (Porto). These research units have both been created in the late 1990s, in the context of the Portuguese reorganization of the national research system triggered by the creation of FCT, which has been the main public funding source for all fields of research in Portugal over the last twenty years. These research units are closely articulated with the Literary Studies departments in the Universities they belong to, since most of the researchers are also professors in those departments; but additionally, these units have been able to hire or to host several professional researchers, with post-doctoral contracts or scholarships. We should also mention the fact that both the Center for Comparative Studies and the Institute for Comparative Literature Margarida Losa were considered as “exceptional” research units according to the most recent international evaluation of the Portuguese system, that took place in 2014.

In the name of the two units we may find the two alternative designations for the field of studies: Comparative Literature and Comparative Studies. In her 1997 article on the situation of the field in Portugal, Helena Carvalhão Buescu (1997, 144) noticed that the two names were by then co-existing, and explained that the new designation, “comparative studies”, tried to deal with “the opening of the comparative field to phenomena which are not necessarily literary, at least at first sight”, and also with the growing interest raised by Cultural Studies; moreover, the methodological and theoretical self-reflexion inherent to Comparative Literature had led to the critical exam of most notions, namely that of “literary”. We must now acknowledge that this opening of the field happened even when the institutions did keep the traditional designation of Comparative Literature. As we may conclude after reading the descriptions provided by the two research Units, they both privilege the study of literary and artistic phenomena in connection with broad social contexts, and aim at promoting interdisciplinary approaches.

⁶ All information about PhD-COMP is available online: <http://phdcomp.letras.ulisboa.pt/> (last accessed 30 May 2018).

These Units describe their work focusing on some overarching research lines. The strategic plan of the University of Lisbon's Center for Comparative Studies is presented in these terms:

[The Center for Comparative Studies] embraces the comparative analysis of literatures, arts and cultures, supported by interdisciplinary methodologies and highly theorized approaches. [...] Issues of interculturality and transculturality, textual and cultural translation have been major tendencies transversely present in many of the initiatives. [...] Engagement with various tendencies in the Social Sciences and the collaboration with colleagues in the fields of anthropology, sociology, migration studies, geography, history has also been a part of the Center's activities, reinforcing the intersection between, on the one hand, philological and textual perspectives and, on the other, culturalist and contextual approaches.⁷

The Center is structured into four research groups: CITCOM—Citizenship, Critical Cosmopolitanism, Modernity/ies, (Post)Colonialism; LOCUS—Spaces, Places, and Landscapes; MORPHE—Memory, Testimony and Forgetfulness; THELEME—Interart and Intermedia Studies. Each group is composed of different research teams and projects, devoted to the study of more specific topics.

The University of Porto's Institute for Comparative Literature Margarida Losa describes its current work as follows:

The strategic plan that the Institute for Comparative Literature will develop during 2015-2020 is titled "Literature and Frontiers of Knowledge: Politics of Inclusion". This cross-thematic line will critically review and further reflect on the nature of the limits and boundaries that have been drawn between different fields of knowledge, as well as on the need to revise and rethink them with contemporary tools, tackling new societal challenges and answering the urgent need for a dynamic and interactive perspective of the University in the 21st century. [...] Using a methodology founded on the guiding principles of the scientific field of Comparative Literature, the project aims an interdisciplinary extension comprising the areas of Social and Human Sciences, but also Exact Sciences such as Physics and Biology, or Applied Sciences like Medicine.⁸

⁷ Text available at the Center for Comparative Studies website (<http://cec.letras.ulisboa.pt/>), under the title "Presentation" (last accessed 30 May 2018).

⁸ The description is available at the Institute for Comparative Literature website (<http://ilcml.com/>), under the title "Strategic Plan" (last accessed 30 May 2018).

In what concerns internal organization, the Institute's project is carried out by three research groups: Inter/TransculturaliTIES, IntermedialiTIES and IntersexualiTIES.

Both research units gather today a large group of senior researchers and PhD students engaged in many different domains of comparative analysis and theory. Multiple lectures and conferences have taken place; multiple articles, books and journals have been published. And also numerous Open Access databases have been created and developed in the frame of these Units; among them we should mention *CECBase*, which consists of an online critical bibliography of twentieth and twenty-first-century comparative studies materials published in Portugal.⁹ Some statistical analysis of the data gathered in this bibliography might provide some insight into the kind of comparative works that have been produced in the Portuguese context, as well as the main contemporary trends.

It is not possible now to have quantifiable data on this panorama, but we may have the general perspective of a more or less steady evolution of “Portuguese Comparative Literature” towards the above-mentioned opening of the field to new methodologies and to other fields of knowledge. The challenges of interdisciplinarity and the occasionally uneven balance between textual and contextual approaches are sometimes felt as serious menaces to the future of the field, as we may read in the article by Álvaro Manuel Machado entitled “La littérature comparée au Portugal: origines et évolution théorique” (2014). In his description of the contemporary trends of comparative literature in Portugal, Machado stresses it is being “replaced and often suffocated” by cultural studies and sociological approaches (*ibid.*, 435-436); moreover, in his view, the study of the “specificity of literary texts” and of literary models and canonical texts is being neglected and tends to be supplanted by some “anthropological and socio-cultural bricolage” (*ibid.*, 442). In some cases, this may be so, but actually, if we bear in mind the descriptions of the Portuguese research units, we must acknowledge their general awareness concerning the demanding scenario of contemporary Humanities, as well as their critical self-reflexion on the difficulties of interdisciplinary perspectives. We may thus conclude that the contemporary scenario of comparative studies in Portugal is vibrant and diverse, though facing the present-day conundrums of the field, in line with the main topics and issues that are being dealt with in Europe and worldwide.

⁹ The database is available at: <http://cecbase.letras.ulisboa.pt/> (last accessed 30 May 2018).

2. The historical background, *Pyrene* and the Portuguese “specificities”

When delving into the historical origins of the comparative outlook in Portuguese literary studies, we come across several important works dedicated to trace sources and influences and to analyse the relations of Portuguese texts and authors with foreign (namely European) literature. Significantly, Álvaro Manuel Machado (1998 and 2014) mentions several generations of Portuguese scholars who, since the late nineteenth century, have paid close attention to reception phenomena, and Helena Carvalhão Buescu (1997, 140-141) identifies reception studies as the first relevant domain of inquiry in Portuguese comparative research, in close connection with imagology and translation studies. This perspective was particularly noticeable in essays like *French Relations of Portuguese Romanticism* [*Relações francesas do romantismo português*], published by Vitorino Nemésio in 1936¹⁰, and it seems this may be a way of describing the origins of the comparative approach in Portuguese literary studies: there was a growing awareness, during the twentieth century, of the “foreign relations” as crucial elements to understand the national literary phenomena, and this became the frame for many fundamental critical works since the 1930s.

From a slightly different perspective, the essay *Pyrene. A Perspective Towards an Introduction to the Comparative History of Portuguese and Spanish Literatures*, published by Fidelino de Figueiredo in 1935, introduced the broad comparative interpretation of two national literary traditions, along with the reflection on the concepts and the methods employed. The importance of Figueiredo’s work has been widely acknowledged, namely by Tania Franco Carvalhal (1990) and J. Cândido Martins (2001), and I would like to evoke it once again. We should recall Fidelino de Figueiredo (Lisbon, 1888-1967) was a remarkable public intellectual, with “broad cultural horizons” and “a relevant intellectual and geographical cosmopolitanism” (Martins 2001, 131). He had established multiple international connexions, in Europe, Brazil and the USA, and was a well-known literary scholar for several decades, in Portugal and abroad.¹¹

¹⁰ See the essay on Vitorino Nemésio (1901-1978) as a “pioneer” of Comparative Literature in Portugal, by Álvaro Manuel Machado (1998).

¹¹ We should notice the essay *Pyrene* was republished in Brazil in 1943, and later translated into Spanish and published in Madrid in 1971. The most recent edition of the book came out in 2015 in Brazil.

In *Pyrene*, Figueiredo proposes to analyse the literatures of Portugal and Spain both as different realities and as a common tradition: this double-faced aim is what I would like to stress here. Tânia Franco Carvalho (1990, 84) has rightly identified these two “apparently contradictory purposes”, explaining they may be understood as a version of the “universal—particular dialectics”. In a way, the author is still following the attempt, typical of nineteenth century historians, to “balance romantic internationalism and nationally specific characteristics” (Martins 2001, 136). But the point is Fidelino de Figueiredo draws several levels of “particularity” (or identity), thus suggesting that the comparative approach allows the recognition of different, and sometimes contradictory, conformations of collective (cultural or literary) identities. Moreover, he argues that the comparative analysis is the kind of study that truly discloses the uniqueness of each text and of each tradition, whilst showing the context and the relations built around (by) all phenomena.

Pyrene is a very coherently structured essay. It starts with the explanation of the title (chapter I) and the concepts in use (“comparative criticism” in chapter II, and “literary nationality” in chapter III). Then, Fidelino de Figueiredo delves into what he considers the specific characteristics of either Portuguese or Spanish literary texts since the Middle Ages, trying to show afterwards (in chapter VI) some “essential contrasts” between these traditions. After a nuanced historical commentary, the author eventually arrives at the conclusion that the Spanish literary tradition is epic, heroic and strong, whereas the Portuguese is lyrical, emotional and weak (Figueiredo 1935, 40-41). We should notice that this comparative approach of literary phenomena within the Iberian frame is a logical step, since the inquiry for specific characteristics by means of a first comparative analytical move towards what is closer in geographical and cultural terms constitutes a necessary initial stage in the attempt to know better any literary and cultural phenomena. In the case of the Portuguese literary world, the Iberian context is inevitably this first (closer) relational frame, where distinctions and contrasts may be established.

At the same time, and right from the title of the essay, Fidelino de Figueiredo puts forward the idea of an Iberian unity, or a common identity, when facing the European and the Western (or even worldwide) context.¹² The title of the essay, *Pyrene*, conspicuously alludes to the classical myth of Pýrēne, as the author explains in the introductory

¹² For an analysis of the representation of Iberian, Romance and European identities, see Fernandes 2013.

chapter, and it becomes clear that, in Figueiredo's version, the mythical story suggests that the Iberian world is just one. The legend tells that Pyrene was a Greek aristocrat maiden who fell in love with Hercules but had to flee to Western lands due to her father's disapproval. Later, Pyrene became the ruler of Hispania, which led to her being attacked by the monster Geryon, from Lybia. After her death, in the mountains where she had sought refuge, "Hercules builds her a majestic mausoleum with hills over hills. And the Gods and men, compassionate, called those mountains the Pyrenees..." (*ibid.*, 8). But the story was not over yet, because Hercules sought revenge and went after the monster "beyond the Ocean, at the far end of the Earth" (*ibidem*). They eventually fought, and Hercules won, thus taking the monster's flock back home at Mount Olympus, in Greece.

In the beginning of the essay, Figueiredo argues that this story, "one of the primordial traditions of the Hispanic world", may be read as the symbol of love and heroic virtues, which could be seen as the two key elements in Iberian culture (*ibid.*, 9). Whether or not we agree with this reading, it is worth noticing the images used by the author to tell the story of Pyrene, and his vivid expressions concerning places and movements: the Peninsula is repeatedly described as being at "the end of the world", clearly separated from Europe by huge mountains, and as a rather peaceful land, even if it is also unprotected, vulnerable and open to dispute and attack; the menace to Iberia comes from the south (through the monster from Lybia) and, in the end, true victory can only be accomplished beyond the Atlantic Ocean. Moreover, the story's outcome implies getting some reward (*i.e.*, the monster's flock), though it leads to coming back not to the Peninsula but to Greece, which confirms itself as the symbolic center, and the origin of all identities.

Even if Fidelino de Figueiredo does not clearly disclose the metaphors and the allegorical reading of the myth, we may conclude that his version of Pyrene's story builds the ground for a definition of Portuguese, Spanish and Iberian identities as relational concepts, evolving from several elements, such as a distinctive geographical location, a European cultural matrix in tension with the threats coming, from its borders and, last but not least, a promising Atlantic horizon. All that exists within the Iberian Peninsula is hence the outcome of this crossroads of influences. The comparative perspective that is thus suggested invites also the analysis of these more distant literary and cultural relations, beyond the Portuguese-Spanish binary contrasts.

In the "Conclusion" of the essay, Fidelino de Figueiredo argues that Portuguese literature, as all other literatures, must be understood within

the frame of its relations, since it has received many influences and has irradiated some few others. In addition, the author suggests that cultural relations are never simple or linear, and in the Portuguese case, there seems to be a fundamental tension between the loyalty to the nation's "inescapable Iberian root" and a "deliberate anti-Iberian tendency", *i.e.*, the willingness to escape from the Iberian root (*ibid.*, 181), namely facing the Atlantic connections, established historically from the fifteenth century onwards. Figueiredo is thus pointing out the Portuguese literary and cultural "specificity" as an intersection of influences, which might be better understood through a comparative perspective. Significantly, this situation is also mentioned by Helena Buescu (1997, 145), when describing Portuguese culture and literature as a "particular comparative crossroads of remarkable importance", due to the privileged connections between Portugal and all the other Portuguese-speaking countries, in America, Africa, and Asia.

The two frames, *i.e.*, the closer Iberian and European context and the broader Atlantic scope, continue to be, in the twenty-first century, the most important and productive perspectives in Portuguese comparative studies. Many projects developed in the research units mentioned above delve into the issues raised in these two directions, looking into both perspectives, either disclosing the relations between the Portuguese literary and cultural world and the Iberian, Romance, and European universes, or revealing the connections with "overseas" literatures and cultures. Somehow, the comparative guidelines put forward by Fidelino de Figueiredo in *Pyrene* remain relevant and illuminating.

Furthermore, even when we are not dealing with Portuguese literature, and are not considering any national issues, the attention to the relational dynamics of literary and cultural phenomena may become instrumental in all intellectual work. In 1935, Fidelino de Figueiredo expressed some very clear confidence in this kind of critical study, which he found was worth carrying on, even if it did not look like an "autonomous" field. To conclude, we may just recall Figueiredo's (1935, 13) praise of comparative studies:

Comparative criticism, even if not an autonomous discipline [...], is a typical part of literary history, which devotes itself to analyse the most prominent international interactions. And I like it because it documents and stimulates universal sympathy, it springs from a movement inclined towards honesty, it broadens aesthetic and moral receptiveness, and it fosters hope.

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CHAPTER THREE

**TEACHING AND RESEARCHING
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
IN A POST-COLONIAL AND BILINGUAL
CONTEXT: THE CASE OF IRELAND**

BRIGITTE LE JUEZ

This study proposes a broad view of the state of comparativism in Ireland from an idiosyncratic perspective, that of a relatively recently formed nation still unsure about some of its cultural markers (Gaelic, Anglophone, and more widely European). Two main criteria come into play in this discussion: first, the history of comparative literature in Ireland, and second, the question of the national languages (Irish and English) and how old frictions between them, related to historical events, affect the reception and progress of the discipline at national level. However, it is worth noting from the outset that, in recent years, especially with the arrival of many different cultures in a more prosperous Irish society, interest in the field has grown among young generations in particular. Furthermore, doctoral theses and scholarly publications of comparative works are also on the increase, and this study will look at recent outputs.

1. Comparative literature in/and Irish history

Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, born in Ireland in 1855, originally a lawyer who became Professor of Greek, Roman, and English literatures at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, was one of the first thinkers to emphasize the importance of the study of comparative literature as a scientific tool with which to explore and analyse worldwide cultural differences and connections, according to their historical, literary, and social circumstances. Posnett paid attention equally to all cultures and genres, and defended the need for objective, analytical methods that would work through a variety of perspectives. His approach was motivated not only by a sense of openness but also by a sense of discovery.

The emergence and development of comparative literature as an academic discipline is indebted in part to Posnett's initiative. In 1886, he published a book entitled *Comparative Literature* in which he foresaw and championed the new field as a science that must allow the recognition and exploration of societal and cultural differences, the very circumstances that engender literary works, both disparate and complementary, offering new perspectives on the human. This book has had a major impact over time and continues to be a reference today.

Many of comparative literature's advocates and detractors have continuously argued, in their own different ways, that the discipline has no clear identity, that it offers no specific theoretical parameters and that its demarcation lines permanently shift (see for instance Wellek 1959, Brunel and Chevrel 1989, Brooks 1995, or Saussy 2006). While, some see this uncertainty as a positive point of departure, others' refuse to consider that an absence of exact definition and delimitation can be a strength, since it reveals an egalitarian opening towards diversity in welcoming all art forms, scientific disciplines and critical theories, regardless of their origins, into the equation (see Le Juez 2013).

The impartial discovery of works of literature and the rejection of limits, whether theoretical, geographical or cultural, also define the comparative literary approach in Ireland. However, other problems specific to Ireland that may seem surprising from a distance, problems Posnett could not have foreseen, still prevent the development of the discipline in an otherwise receptive intellectual environment.

Comparative literature made its formal appearance in Ireland as an academic discipline in 2004 (in circumstances outlined below), quite late compared to other European countries. At that time, Irish universities had already been offering courses that included comparative aspects (art and literature, adaptation, cross-cultural influences, post-colonialism, reception of the classics, etc.), but in a more "general literature" spirit.¹ Its troubled history, its double identity and its many connections around the world (both through its political needs in times of revolutions and through its diaspora) together make Ireland a plural country, where openness comes quite naturally. However, in what may seem at first contradictory, the weight of history still has an influence on the attitudes of some scholars, and therefore of university administrators too, and this creates obstacles to the development of Comparative Literature in Ireland.

¹ This expression is not commonly used in English. I am translating it from other languages which are more familiar with the concept: "littérature générale" in French or "allgemeine Literatur" in German, for example.

In general, although comparative literature is supposedly borderless, we observe that the choice of, or preference for, certain comparative methods vary according to national backgrounds, sometimes despite states' geographical proximity and, in some cases, cultural ties that ought to bring regions closer together. Constructive outcomes can be produced, of course: France and Germany, for instance, have benefitted from their respective perspectives on the notion of reception, helping it to blossom, from the 1960s to the 1980s in particular. This could potentially work even better between two neighbouring countries belonging to the same linguistic area, like Britain and Ireland. However, it does not necessarily follow, and the approaches selected by the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic concerning the teaching of literary comparison vary greatly. The reason for their distinctive choices is not only to be found in their cultural or educational specificities, but also in their historical and political points of confluence and conflict.

Indeed, Britain, for almost eight centuries, until the early twentieth century, colonized Ireland with progressively more extreme detrimental effect, in particular disowning and subordinating its indigenous people, forcefully attempting to remove their beliefs and native language from them, portraying them through humiliating stereotypes, and even, in a sadly well-known episode (The Great Famine), letting them starve to death. Thus, one of the essential objectives in the struggle for independence that took place subsequently, in the vital need to save and redefine themselves, was the retrieval and promotion by the Irish of their ability to write again in their original Gaelic tongue.²

Ironically, after such a long time using the imposed language, English, the Irish had made it eloquently and fully their own. Suffice is to think of the Nobel Prize-winning Irish English-writing authors, such as George

² Irish remained a majority language until the eighteenth century when it began to decline, mostly as a result of repressive measures on the part of the British Government. Bilingualism then expanded. In the middle of the nineteenth century, this phenomenon became more pronounced, due in part to specific events, such as the Great Famine which caused the death of about one million people and the emigration of many others, affecting poorer areas where Irish was largely spoken. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Gaelic League was formed to promote the revival of the practice of the ancestral language. Later, as Ireland determined to become a full-fledged European country, the learning of European languages was advocated. Simultaneously, Irish became seen as backward, as slowing the development of a new Ireland. Today, in a prosperous economy, this view has been reversed and Irish is again perceived favourably, especially by young people. However, the damage seems irreversible in terms of actual usage.

Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats or even Samuel Beckett—not to mention other worldwide renowned authors who received no prizes, like Oscar Wilde or James Joyce—to illustrate the point that the Irish belong with the best Anglophone writers (see Le Juez 2017). Yet, in the constitution of the Irish Free State (1922-1937), the status Ireland obtained before the Irish Republic was declared, Irish was pronounced the “National Language”, followed by a mention that English was “equally recognised as an official language” (Article 4³). Yet, as a matter of fact, English has remained the most widely-spoken language in Ireland ever since.⁴

It is therefore understandable that Ireland should wish to stand up for its values. However, ways of doing so can lead to a certain chauvinism and even cultural protectionism. While an enthusiastic devotion for a nation to such a cause as retrieving its collective identity may be both desirable and productive, it can also create a cultural rut. Evidently, in the case of Ireland, it was at first a matter of cultural regeneration and survival, and there was none of the ethnocentrism found in European imperial states—quite the opposite in fact as, and this is a trait Ireland shared with other colonised nations, there was instead a deep collective sense of inferiority. However, this very condition somewhat dictated the choices made at academic level.

To protect Irish from the dominance of English, various measures have been taken over time. For example, *Foras na Gaeilge*, the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the whole island of Ireland, was founded in 1999, following the creation of four dedicated radio stations, including the national station *RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta* launched in 1972, and a TV station, *TG4*, launched in 1996. Both media feature literary programmes or review shows, such as *Léirmheas Leabhar*. Also, there currently is a dozen or so Gaelic-writing publishers. And financial support is offered annually, such as the Publishing Scheme that aims to assist presses to publish Irish-language books, or grants awarded to comprehensive plans submitted by groups who wish to develop and promote Irish-language literary projects. However, these measures have also had backfiring consequences insofar as they have resulted in a situation of exception which, in turn, has caused

³ See Article 8 in the current Constitution: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html>. (last accessed 11 November 2017).

⁴ According to the population census carried out in 2011, less than 2% of the population use Irish in their daily lives, but more than 10% (*i.e.* half a million) Irish use it at school or in educational institutions.

a form of separation from mainstream literary circles for Irish readers and writers that still persists today.

From its inception, far from tapping into the riches offered by the cultural plurality at its core, the young nation wanting to focus on the repossession of its ancestral identity, consciously or not, produced a two-tier culture. As the only established university, Trinity College Dublin (founded in 1592, connected to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, in England) had traditionally been the college for the affluent English-speaking Protestants, in 1908 a federal university system, the National University of Ireland, was created forming a new, Catholic, network of universities where the Irish language was one of the requirements. Today, the Catholic *ethos* is no longer obligatory, but both English and Irish are still required for entry to all degrees.⁵

Both languages are taught in primary school, but Irish remains a minor subject in practice (except in a small number of *Gaelscoileanna*, Irish-medium schools). It is taught rather like a second language, not like one of the two national languages, although it does benefit from more attention and teaching hours than foreign languages. English and Irish syllabi are designed separately and with different methods and targets in mind. At university level, the difference is striking, because English and Irish departments tend not to cooperate with one another. This distance seems to be more pronounced in Gaelic departments who appear to shut themselves away from any interaction from modern language departments, at research level in particular.

This naturally complicates the place and task of comparative literature. While in Europe, courses in comparative literary studies are generally associated with national language departments, in Ireland, they are associated with foreign culture and language departments. University College Dublin (UCD) is the only university whose English Department tried to create a comparative literature programme. It is worth noting that, at the time, this attempt was led by Declan Kiberd, a well-known, bilingual, Irish academic and expert on literatures in both English and Irish. Kiberd first spoke eloquently on the problem in an article, which appeared in “The idea of tradition” issue of *The Crane Bag* in 1979 (edited by Seamus Deane), entitled “Writers in Quarantine? The Case for Irish studies”. In it, he reflects on Irish writers’ self-imposed isolation due to the introverted posture of the Gaelic movement pre- and post-independence, and the accepted distinction commonly made between literature written in

⁵ For further detail, see <http://www.nui.ie/college/entry-requirements.asp> (last accessed 11 November 2017).

English and literature written in Irish (respectively distinguished then as Anglo-Irish and Gaelic literatures), taking the playwright John Millington Synge's model effort to synthesize the two traditions, as a positive example: "Synge also believed in a fusion of the two Irelands, Gaelic and Anglo-Irish, so that neither should shed its pride—a challenge which confronts Irishmen more urgently than ever today" (Kiberd 1982, 341). However, as he notes, "Seventy years after the death of Synge, a literary partition between writing in Irish and English divides the classroom of Ireland as surely as a political partition divides the land" (*ibid.*, 342). And he adds: "To teach Irish and English in separate classes of our schools and universities is surely to deepen the chasm" (*ibid.*, 344). This reading of the situation is still valid today, and Kiberd continues to deplore it.

In a 2010 interview, he observed that Irish intellectuals practice the comparative approach even if they might not recognise it as such, and that they do so in particular in relation to Britain, and in a paradoxical posture of both admiration and rejection:

The very way in which Ireland was "invented" as a culture a hundred years ago is a sustained act of comparison with England, but it's also, of course, an act of homage to a culture whose political representatives those Revivalists are fighting. You know, someone like Pearse loved Wordsworth, modelled himself on Matthew Arnold, yet he leads a military action against the British presence. The fascination for me is that Pearse himself was a comparativist, as well as being a nationalist—one because he was the other. (Pushkarevskaya-Naughton 2010, 130)

Kiberd adds that it is important to remove oneself from one's culture, enough at least to be able to see it objectively, and that comparative literature allows readers to do that. What Kiberd does not state categorically here is that one of comparative literature's aims is to eliminate cultural prejudices, and that some of the comparative most enduring and effective methods, such as reception studies or imagology, which appeared after world wars, when the need to impartially understand and receive other cultures as well as critically take an inward look at one's own, was felt most acutely. Such methods, if applied, could have been, and could still be very beneficial to the reconciliation of the two Irish cultural lineages.

However, Ireland does not seem to be ready to take such a major step.⁶ In fact, the Gaelic tradition and its English counterpart continue to evolve

⁶ It is worth mentioning that some colleges, such as Dublin City University or University College Cork, have formed Schools that bring English, Irish and foreign

in parallel. And so Kiberd's efforts in UCD did not pay off, and no comparative literature programme was ever launched there. As the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics did not feel the urge to create one either, there is regretfully at present no comparative literature at any level in this important university.

Thankfully, unlike UCD, other Irish universities (not including Northern Irish universities as they are part of the British system), embarked on Masters programmes that either focus on comparative literary methods and themes, or contain some comparative elements. Before going into the detail of these programmes, it should be noted that there is still no comparative literature at undergraduate level anywhere on the island—although NUI Galway is envisaging a Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme in World Literature—and that Irish students who enrol for Master of Arts (MA) degrees come from very different backgrounds.⁷ Typically, BA students embarking on an MA in comparative literature have completed literary studies programmes combined with music, history, languages, intercultural studies, education, law, media, etc., a combination that predisposes them well enough to start comparative studies at the highest level. Until Ireland, who is experiencing an economic upturn after a drastic recession, considers offering BAs in comparative literature, the discipline remains mostly under-represented and many Masters students actually come from abroad: the United States, the Middle East and Asia, in addition to European countries—France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, for the most part, students who graduated in comparative literature at their home universities and wish to complete a further degree in English.

languages together. Unfortunately, this gathering does not mean that students necessarily access diplomas mixing modules in English and Irish, or in Irish and foreign languages. The partition still exists, but working within the same school may encourage scholars to demonstrate openness and imagination.

⁷ However, it should also be noted that at secondary school level, the English syllabus for the final year (preparing for the Leaving Certificate Examination) is based on “comparative modes”. For example, in 2015, a selection of texts could be compared according to: (i) Theme or Issue, (ii) The General Vision and Viewpoint, or (iii) Literary Genre. For more on this, see <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Senior-Cycle-/Syllabuses-and-Guidelines/English-Prescribed-Material-for-English-in-the-Leaving-Certificate-Examination-in-2015-Circular-0011-2013-.pdf> (last accessed 11 November 2017). Several English teachers who completed the MA in Comparative literature at Dublin City University, however, said that the syllabus builders are unaware of comparative methodologies and that there is a real need for teachers to be trained in comparative literary approaches proper.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that, several years before Kiberd ever mentioned the importance of the discipline, comparative literature programmes in Ireland first appeared in the younger, more adventurous universities (ironically, not those conventionally associated with literary studies): Dublin City University and the University of Limerick. Both were organised since their inception in large departments (called schools) of Language and (Inter)cultural studies in which sections of national and foreign languages and literatures function together. This, until recently, created a major difference with the traditional departments of languages and literatures in older universities (Trinity College Dublin and National University of Ireland colleges) that operated independently from one another. In the last decade, for budgetary reasons, these departments were reconfigured into similar schools of languages, literatures and cultures, and have since been able, in some cases, to embark on and develop successfully intercultural and comparative studies programmes.

2. The language question

Because of this organization in intercultural schools, the dominant common language is English and students need not know Gaelic or foreign languages (although the vast majority of them in fact do). The knowledge of foreign languages is not a prerequisite to be accepted on a comparative literature Masters programme. The studied texts are available in English translation, and students who can read the originals are encouraged to do so. The separation between Irish and English literatures has therefore created a situation where, despite the fact comparative literature degrees are situated in foreign language sections, they function as if they were run by English departments, as they are in the UK. Irish seems to have fallen by the wayside and has currently no part in the comparative endeavour. This situation is all the more regrettable that, as Kiberd (1982, 341) remarked, on one hand, some texts initially written in Irish can be studied in their English translation without a mention of their Gaelic origins, and on the other hand, they are also studied in Irish-language departments “with no attempt to appraise the author’s own recreation of these works in English”, *i.e.* without any constructive comparative considerations.

One other reason why knowledge of foreign languages is not compulsory (a knowledge that was deemed indispensable by early comparatists) is that comparative literary studies increasingly include the study of the connections between literature, the arts, the sciences and modern media, an aspect that requires a solid grasp of languages

specifically associated with scientific, technological and/or semantics-related fields (such as ecology, the digital humanities, film or semiotics).

The Irish-English issue, which has proved an impediment for the very existence of comparative literature in some Irish universities, is far from being a side issue, and brings us back to the pioneering questions of the discipline, to the dialogic spirit its forefathers wished to promote, and it is clear that comparative literature's objective and creative methods could help resolve this presently stalemated situation.

3. Panorama of comparative literature programmes in Ireland

One of the major impediments for the creation of new, adequate programmes has been, on the one hand, the appropriateness and diversity of specialisms and experience among professors, and on the other, the training of new researchers. When the first comparative literature programmes began to appear in Ireland, there were very few qualified lecturers with doctorates in comparative literature. Most of those who were adequately qualified either were not Irish-born and were employed in departments that were not conducive to teaching or researching in comparative literature, or they were Irish-born but had obtained their qualifications abroad and found themselves in the same position as their non-national colleagues. Not only were these academics in small numbers, but they were also scattered across the country in diverse departments and in colleges where comparative literature was of little interest, especially as they were often managed by administrators (Presidents of Universities and Deans of Faculty of Humanities setting an agenda that the Humanities worldwide still regularly deplore) more intent on rapidly increasing student numbers than on building excellence in crucial, modern, arts-related fields—and this despite the fact that most calls for European teaching mobility and research funding sought specialists with intercultural, interdisciplinary and therefore comparative skills. There was little incentive or logistical support to organize new programmes in comparative literature, until 2003, when the preparations for the very first degree began.

1) Degrees

In 2004, the first Master of Arts in comparative literature started at Dublin City University (DCU). Other Irish universities followed in DCU's footsteps with the creation of similar programmes, containing variations.

In 2006, the University of Limerick (UL) offered an MA in comparative literature and cultural studies, and soon after, in 2007, Trinity College, Dublin (TCD) introduced a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Comparative Literature. Finally, in 2012, University College, Cork (UCC) started an MA in comparative and world Literature—which unfortunately did not last and has since been replaced by two new programmes, an MA in languages and cultures in 2016, and an MA in Comparative Aesthetics and the Arts in 2017. In the meantime, in 2013, the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) proposed an MA in International Contemporary Literature and Media. Only two Irish universities did not introduce comparative literature in their programmes: apart from UCD, as discussed earlier, more surprisingly, no attempt was ever made to offer Comparative literature at the last of the seven Irish universities, NUI Maynooth, despite its strong expertise and reputation in the Arts and Humanities.

2) Syllabi

As a result of the language problem identified in the previous section, objects of study rarely bring in comparisons between English and Irish authors. The studied texts tend to be selected from around the world, which does not signify a noticeable emphasis on World Literature. As an island at the western edge of Europe, and as a result of political strife, in the past Ireland politically and culturally often turned toward the European and American continents in its search for allies against and refuge from British rulers. Its intellectual and creative dynamics have not changed, and Irish comparativism reflects the country's multi-cultural roots and connections.

Let us examine now the comparative literary curricula offered at university level. In order to meet budgetary regulations, some of the modules are shared with other Masters, whether in Intercultural, European, Media, Film and Television, or Translation Studies, and sometimes also with doctoral programmes:

- Core modules generally include two or three of the following: Introduction to Comparative Literature, Comparative Methods and Practices, Literature and Visual Arts, Textual Constructions of Cultural Identity, Theory of Post-Colonial Literature, and Debates in World Literature. Some programmes are more focussed on literary questions, others on cultural studies issues or literary translation. Every university therefore tends to have its own approach and focus.

- The principal specifically comparative theories taught (and the main corresponding references) are: Reception and Reader-Response Theory (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish), Intertextuality and Semiotics (Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes), Imagology⁸ (Hugo Dyserinck, Joep Leerssen, and in relation to children's literature, Emer O'Sullivan), Geocriticism (Bertrand Westphal, and attached to Spatial Studies, Gaston Bachelard, Franco Moretti, Michel Foucault, Marie-Laure Ryan and Lubomír Doležel), Myth-criticism (Pierre Brunel, Gilbert Durand, Marina Warner, and when studied in connection with fairy-tales, Bruno Bettelheim, Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes), *Ekphrasis* (James Heffernan, Ruth Webb and W. J. T. Mitchell in particular, as applied to poems, short stories and novels), and Adaptation (Linda Hutcheon, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan mostly, as applied to cinema, television and graphic novels).
- Some of the subjects found in optional modules are: Cultural constructions of the past, Literature of the holocaust, Utopian theory and texts, Metamorphosis in literature, Migration literature, Travel literature, Literature, film and human rights, The Other in European cinema, The monstrous in literature and contemporary art, German-Irish cultural relations, Franco-Irish literary relations, Dantean echoes, Cultures and representations of the Mafia, Postmodernist literature of Central and Eastern Europe, Culture of memory in Spain and Latin America.

These options allow students to apply their knowledge of and interest in environments that are culturally and historically determined. Those who are proficient in foreign languages can also add literary translation modules to their list of electives.

Students are not examined formally but their progress is evaluated according to different forms of continuous assessment, and through end-of-semester essays as well as final dissertations/short theses. The subjects that the students select for these assessments are generally open, as long as they apply one of the comparative methodologies learned during the academic semester/year.

It is interesting to note that UL students can avail of options offered by NUIG. This collaboration between geographically close universities is a

⁸ Daniel-Henri Pageaux and Jean-Marc Moura, not being widely translated into English, fail to be as well-known in Ireland as their work would deserve.

unique case, at least for now. Like the intra-university practices mentioned earlier, the inter-university sharing of modules is justified by the low budgets available to comparative literature programmes in all of the universities involved—a low budget which also applies to the recruitment of specialists. This state of affairs prevents both the promotion and the development of current programmes, leading in some cases to the disappearance of some of them.

3) Doctoral research

PhD theses (like MA dissertations) privilege different themes and methods according to their universities' own specific *foci*: Reception studies (“Dantean Returns in the Works of Thomas Stearns Eliot, Eugenio Montale, and Seamus Heaney”, Daniela Panzera, MIC/UL, 2015); Translation and World Literature (“Politics of Cross-cultural Reading: Rabindranath Tagore, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Dario Fo”, Marion Dalvai, TCD, 2012 / “Towards a Postcolonial Translation: Patrick White’s *Voss* in Italian and French”, Giulia Zuodar, TCD, 2014); Literature and the Visual Arts (“Indestructible Treasures: Art and the Ekphrastic Encounter in Selected Novels by John Banville”, Bevin Doyle, DCU, 2015 / “Upgrading Ekphrasis: Representations of Digital Space and Virtual Worlds in Contemporary Literature”, Nina Shiel, DCU, 2015 / “The Unspeakable Victorian: Thomas Carlyle, Ideology and Adaptation”, Mark Wallace, DCU, 2016); Spatial Studies (“The Architectural Void: Space as Transgression in Postmodern Short Fiction of the Fantastic (1974-2010)”, Patricia Garcia, DCU, 2013); Imagology (“Invisible People: Literary Expressions of Marginalisation from the Gaeltacht to the Ghetto in Twentieth-Century Literature”, Zara Blake, DCU, 2014 / “‘Ambiguous State of Being’: Identity Construction in Contemporary Arab-American (Post-9/11) poetry”, Omar Baz Radwan, DCU, 2016); Literature and Education (“Second-Level Students’ Perceptions of immigrants Investigated in the Classroom: an Imagological Mixed-methods Approach”, Laura Dooley, DCU, 2015 / “Venture In/between Ethics, Education and Literary Media: Making Cases for Dialogic Communities of Ethical Enquiry”, Colm Kenny, DCU, 2017), and more general themes (“Partners in Practice: Contemporary Irish Literature, World Literature and Digital Humanities”, Sonia Howell, NUIM, 2012 / “Weaving Words: a Diachronic Analysis of the Representation of Gender, Sexuality and otherness in Women’s (Re)writings of *La Belle et la Bête*”, Dearbhla McGrath, DCU, 2013 / “Fortune and the Troilus and Cressida Story: a Study of the Representations and Functions of Fortune in Boccaccio’s

Filostrato, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", Marina Ansaldo, NUIG, 2013 / "Social Paranoia and Absurdist Fiction in Cold War America and Soviet Russia: a Comparative Study", Miranda Corcoran, UCC, 2016⁹).

This overview shows that, if comparative literature programmes in Ireland have thus far failed to establish strong links with departments of Irish Gaelic literature and language, the interest of PhD scholars for Irish-related topics occasionally by-passes this hurdle and brings Irish cultural aspects into play within worldwide studies—*e.g.*, in comparisons between Irish-speaking and African-Americans authors. Where secondary school teachers undertake doctoral work, innovative concepts and approaches associated with education are developed that offer ground-breaking developments in teaching practices—such as the place of imagology or ethics in the teaching of literature and film on the English curriculum.¹⁰ It also demonstrates the wide variety of comparative literary interests among early-career researchers.

4) Associations:

- CLAI: Comparative Literature Association of Ireland

CLAI was formed in 2007 by colleagues looking for greater cooperation between researchers in comparative literature, in Ireland. One of CLAI's first goals was to promote the discipline in Irish universities, which was only partially accomplished, and in order to do so, the association organized various events each year. In November 2008, the first international graduate symposium in comparative literature was held at DCU. The overarching theme was kept open to encourage a first overview of the work being done at the time.¹¹ The second symposium was held in TCD in 2009 on the general theme of "Literature and Visual Arts". Also in 2009, another conference took place, supported by CLAI, on "The European Avant-garde, 1890-1930", at UCD. In 2010, the third CLAI

⁹ Data retrieved from the Irish universities research repository. See rian.ie. (last accessed 10 November 2017).

¹⁰ For comparative studies undertaken around one specific Irish author, see current research at the UCD James Joyce Research Centre: <http://www.ucd.ie/joyceresearchcentre/aboutus/phdstudents/>. (last accessed 13 November 2017).

¹¹ The proceedings of this conference are available here: <http://www.complit.org/ProceedingsCLAI2008.pdf>. (last accessed 10 November 2017).

international graduate symposium took place at UL on the theme of “Gender and Identity in Comparative Literature”. On each occasion, plenary speakers from Ireland and/or Europe were invited, such as Susan Bassnett, Lucia Boldrini, Ann Rigney or Joseph McMinn. Also in 2011, NUIG organized an interdisciplinary workshop on “The Place of the Real”, at which Margaret Higonnet, former President of the American Comparative Literature Association, was a special guest.¹²

- REELC/ENCLS: Réseau Européen de Littérature Comparée/European Network of Comparative Literary Studies

Several CLAI members have also been members of the *REELC/ENCLS* and close links continue to exist between the two associations. In 2012, an international comparative symposium on the theme of “Transitions” took place at UCC which included an *REELC/ENCLS* panel made of several members of the then executive committee of the network. In 2015, the *REELC/ENCLS* 6th biennial congress on the themes of “Longing and Belonging—Désir et appartenance” took place in Ireland, in two locations: DCU and NUIG (thus bridging the Eastern and Western coasts of the island).¹³ This major collaborative event brought together participants from forty-two countries around the globe.

At the latest congress, which took place at the University of Helsinki, in Finland, in August 2017, the network underwent some important changes and has now become the European Society of Comparative Literature / *Société Européenne de Littérature Comparée* (*ESCL/SELC*), which brings in onto an interesting and higher level of activities.¹⁴

Finally, together CLAI and *ESCL/SECL* have run specific panels at recent International Association of Comparative Literature/*Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée* congresses.

¹² Presidents of CLAI: Brigitte Le Juez (DCU, 2008-2014), Peter Arnds (TCD, 2014-now).

¹³ Unfortunately, despite the *REELC/ENCLS*'s policy to invite papers in the national language(s) of the host university (in addition to the official languages of the network which are English and French), and despite a call for papers in Irish, no proposal came from the Irish-speaking academic community.

¹⁴ I was the last General Coordinator of the *REELC/ENCLS*. The first President of the *ESCL/SELC* is Asunción Lopez-Varela (Universidad Complutense, Madrid).

5) Book publications

The following is a rapid overview of Irish-based academic monographs and volumes of thematic essays published since the beginnings of CLAI: Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn (eds.), *Investigating Identities. Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction*, 2009; Gisela Holfter, *Heinrich Böll and Ireland*, 2011; Bill Richardson, *Borges and Space*, 2012; Brigitte Le Juez (ed.), *Transitions*, Special Issue of *Revue de littérature comparée*, 2013; Peter Arnds, *Lycanthropy in German Literature*, 2015; Bill Richardson, *Spatiality and Symbolic Expression. On the Links between Place and Culture*, 2015; Brigitte Le Juez and Olga Springer (ed.), *Shipwreck and Island Motifs in Literature and the Arts*, 2015; Paolo Bartoloni, *Objects in Italian Life and Culture. Fiction, Migration, and Artificiality*, 2016; Massimo Fusillo, Brigitte Le Juez and Beatrice Seligardi (ed.), *Longing and Belonging—Désir et appartenance*, Special Issue of *Between*, 2017; Brigitte Le Juez (ed.), *Longing and Belonging*, Special Issue of *The Wenshan Review*, 2017. The last two titles are part of an ongoing series of publications related to the 6th REELC/ENCLS congress mentioned earlier.

It is now to be hoped that the openness and diversity of current comparative literary studies in Ireland will pave the way to a more all-embracing attitude from English, Irish and Foreign Language and Literature departments around Ireland. The first Irish comparatist, Hucheson Macaulay Posnett certainly supported the global and potentially fruitful gathering of different traditions. It would therefore serve Ireland well to go back to the origins of Comparative Literature, and following from the principles outlined by early thinkers, to promote “a form of cosmopolitanism against the entrenched form of seeing things as nationally-defined, self-enclosed units” (Leerssen 2010, 118).

Comparative literature in Ireland, as in other European countries, belongs to a field of interactions between arts-related, sociological and scientific domains that address cross-cultural and national questions in light of one another, equally welcoming regional and world literatures. However, at the same time, it evolves within a paradoxical context made of a broad-minded espousal of innovative literary studies and a stubbornly inward outlook. Yet, comparative literature is precisely the discipline that could provide a new and positive perspective on ancestral differences, thus creating a new bond between two aspects of Irish identity. As a laboratory for contemporary cultures to develop an *ethos* of living and thinking together, refusing any sense of ethnic, social or intellectual hierarchies, comparative literature indeed offers exceptional opportunities. In view of

the unprecedented global migratory movement the world is experiencing, which challenges physical and cultural borders, academic limitations within one country, if historically justified, now definitely seem outdated.

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CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN UKRAINE: BROTHERHOOD AND PERIPHERY

NIKOL DZIUB

The aim of the paper is to analyze the issues of literary comparatism in the Ukrainian post-imperial and post-Soviet context. Like other former Soviet countries, Ukraine has to deal with its own peripheral identity—an artificial identity first built *ex nihilo* by Russian imperialism, and then converted into an anti-imperialist claim and an anti-centralist *ethos*: peripheral “microtopies” use their “peripherality” to escape from an oppressive macrosystem.

What are the aims of comparative literature in this context? Comparative literature is often defined as a scientific discipline whose purpose is to identify cross-literary relations. Ukrainian comparative studies are based on the comparison of texts and literary events specific to literatures considered in their national dimension. But Ukrainian comparative literature also generates literary theory. For example, researchers who work in the Department of “literary theory and comparative literature” at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature (Kyiv) are interested in the theoretical aspects of contemporary “literary science”, and in everything that concerns the methodology of literary criticism, literary reception and the analysis of literary discourse. But these academics also take into account the questions that currently occupy those who study modern and contemporary Ukrainian literature: that is why postcolonial criticism is central to Ukrainian comparatism. Colonial and postcolonial imagology is one of the most important research fields: among lots of other books, we may mention a collective volume entitled *The European Melancholy. Ukrainian Westernist Discourse* (Європейська меланхолія. Дискурс українського окциденталізму, 2008). The book analyzes the development of the anti-imperialist and pro-Europe discourse in Ukrainian literature, from romanticism to Ukrainian contemporary literature (with a particular focus on the books of one of the most famous contemporary Ukrainian authors, Yurii Andrukhovych, whose works, which have been

abundantly translated and discussed (see Wierzejska 2015; Kato 2016), analyze the complex post-imperial and post-Soviet Ukrainian identity.

To understand the issues of comparative literature in Ukraine, it is also important to take into consideration the historiography of Ukrainian literature. At the end of the sixteenth century, there was the so-called Ukrainian Renaissance. According to the Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky, this period “[was] our first national renaissance” (“був нашим першим національним Відродженням”; Nalyvaiko 2007, 44). The second “national revival” took place in the early nineteenth century; it is part of a broader revolt against the ideology of the Russian Empire: this movement is called the *Panslavic Union*. These two Renaissances are the most significant episodes in the history of the literary emancipation of Ukraine, and during both the first and the second Renaissance, Ukrainian literature “discovered” its “kinship” to a broader cultural tradition. However, in this context, the Second Renaissance is more significant than the first one. A particularly revealing work is Ivan Kotliarevsky’s *Eneida*, or *Little Russian Æneid* (*Енеида. На малоросійській языкъ перелиціюванна І. Котляревскимъ*, 1798), which was the first text published in modern Ukrainian: this first “official” Ukrainian epic work is both Western (it is a rewriting of Virgil’s *Æneid*) and peripheral (Kotliarevsky uses dialectal and idiomatic expressions). This work is parodic, Aeneas being a “lively fellow,/Lusty as any Cossack blade” (Kotliarevsky 1963, 2). It positioned Ukrainian national literature in a European (mythological) system, and intended to “share ‘core’ European Enlightenment convictions and values [...], though, given the realities of censorship in the Russian Empire, it could not afford to be anti-monarchical” (Pavlyshyn, 188). Furthermore, “the lack of official status made literature especially important for the development of the language and the elevation of its prestige” (Remy 2017, 43).

The concept of peripheral/European identity is a reply to the name “Little Russia” given by Russians to Ukraine (to be precise, the expression has been formalized by Catherine the Great, who liquidated the Cossack state). So, the political and linguistical opposition between Russia and Ukraine is an opposition between *center* and *periphery*, but also between *major* and *minor*. A particularly significant book in this context is Gogol’s *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* (*Вечори на хуторі поблизу Диканьки*, 1831), where the dialect of the Ukrainian beekeeper Panko, who lives in a “khutir” (*хутір*—a small village), is opposed to the pure and sophisticated Russian language spoken by the readers of the novel, who live in Saint Petersburg. This work is known as a “Russian” contribution to world literature, but it is also the first famous work about

Ukraine, which appears as a cultural and linguistic periphery. Gogol uses his protagonist to give to peripheral men a voice, to offer them the opportunity to show how they see the center of the Empire—Saint Petersburg. Gogol's (1926, 142) discourse is partially imagological. In Dikanka, all strangers are considered as Germans: "Among us every one is called a German who comes from a foreign country; even if he is a Frenchman, a Hungarian, or a Swede—he is still a German". This is obviously a parodic way to blame an imperial point of view which mistakes a minority or a periphery for another one.

This "comparative" and imagological process is one of the key "gestures" of Ukrainian literature. In his poem entitled *The Dream* (*Сон*, 1844), Taras Shevchenko (a writer who represents Ukrainian national literature in world literature's map, and a member of the *Panslavic Union*) evokes an imaginary flight over Saint Petersburg, which he describes as an "endless city" without borders, and similar to other imperial cities:

Above, black mist-clouds hover thickly.
I reach it.—Endless city.
Turkish? Or
German for sure?
Or, maybe, even Muscovite! (Shevchenko 1961)

This poem was blacklisted by Russian authorities until 1905. For Gogol, the Ukrainian language was peripheral, because dialectal, but it still enriched the "central" Russian culture linguistically, literally and morally. For Shevchenko, the Ukrainian language becomes an instrument of resistance, but also of dialogue with the center. But the center does not want to understand this language.

This reflection on the relationship between center and periphery, and on the "interbetween peripheral" situation (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1998, 135) leads us to question the role of the Panslavic ideology in the creation of a comparatist way of thinking. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a "proto-comparatist" movement emerged, whose goal was to legitimize the union between cultures located at the margins of the Russian Empire. The founding of the *Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius* (*Кирило-Методіївське товариство*, 1845) by Mykola Kostomarov was a significant event in the context of the forming of an "utopian" Slavic federation. The principles of this brotherhood (whose members were named, among others, Taras Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish and Mykola Hulak) were based on Christian morality and on the romantic idea of a Slavic union, or of a confederation based on the Cossack republicanism, whose main goal was the abolition of serfdom. This Panslavic ideal was

also based on a particular conception of literary imitation. For example, the model of Kostomarov's *Book of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People* (*Книга буття українського народу*, 1846) was Adam Mitzkevitch's *Books of the Polish People and of the Polish Pilgrimage* (*Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego*), published in Paris in 1832. The Methodians take of course in consideration the linguistic, literary and cultural plurality of the Slavs (*i.e.* the Muscovites, the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Slovenes, the Illyro-Serbians, the Byelorussians, and the Bulgarians), but they want to unite them in an "in-between periphery" (Kostomarov 1921, 22). The aim of this brotherhood is to promote national and local cultures and languages, the comparison between these different cultural (but not always geographical) peripheries being based on a same diagnosis of "minority". The anti-imperialist movement prefigures anti-Soviet and post-colonial Ukrainian comparatism (see Shkandrij 2001). So, since the beginning, comparatism in Ukraine has oscillated between "literary studies" and "comparative folk studies". The creation of new configurations of comparatism is motivated by political rather than theoretical elements: the question of "national *ethos*" leads to comparison. Kostomarov, who in some way founded the first wave of Ukrainian comparatism (see Bakula 2002, 13 and Gritsik 2009, 319) worked on Ukrainian literary and oral expressions in comparison with Russian traditions. He acknowledged that, linguistically speaking, the Eastern Slavs were closer to each other than to other Slavs. His work entitled *Two Rus' Nations* (*Дві руські народності*), published in 1861, is considered as a prefiguration of "scientific imatology" (Nalyvaiko 2006, 92), even though this essay is binary and somehow ethnocentric and stereotypical. Of course, Kostomarov focus on imperialistic clichés, but at the same time he creates clichés in order to distinguish Russian identity (which is characterized by a tendency to autocracy and collectivism) from Ukrainian identity (whose keywords are freedom and individualism). It should also be noted that Kostomarov's mother was the housemaid, which belonged to his father—the wealthy landlord—and that the abolition of serfdom dates back only to 1861—that is why the first representative of Ukrainian comparatism was animated by the spirit of protest. Furthermore, there is another very important aspect in Kostomarov's thinking: his Europeanism. As an academic, Kostomarov is influenced by German philosophy (Herder, Hegel), but also by Czech slavophilia, and by the romantic tradition (in particular Hoffmann). It is interesting to notice that Kostomarov is not taken in by the illusion of "geographical proximity", and that he thinks that one should be careful when comparing Slavic mythologies (see Kostomarov 1994, 262).

So, the first Ukrainian comparatism was born in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a committed comparatism, which stands up to Russian imperialism, and which tries to highlight the differences between Ukrainian and Russian traditions and cultures. That is also why Ukrainian comparatism is widely open to European influences.

This brings us to the second wave of Ukrainian comparatism. The purpose of the first Ukrainian Pan-Slavic comparatism was, to put it very simply, to highlight the differences between Ukraine and Russia; but the representatives of the second wave will affirm that, if one wants to understand what is singular, one has to understand what is common. Mykhailo Drahomanov, a specialist of classical antiquity, and a Professor at St. Volodymyr University in Kyiv, played an important role in this upheaval. His stay in Europe (in Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Florence, Heidelberg, etc.) in the 1870s gave him enough perspective to get an overview of European literature: however, it does not mean that he forgot the specific Ukrainian point of view on literature. In 1874, he gave a lecture on the “Slavic Treatment of Œdipal History” (“Слов’янські переробки Едіпової історії”): it is one of the most important texts in the construction of a comparative thought, inasmuch as Drahomanov’s method was based on the search for similarities between the narrations of different peoples. Drahomanov notably wrote a “Note on the Comparative Method” (“Наконеchnа замітка про порівняльну методу”). He states that one will be able to understand the national specificities only after having developed an international comparative thought (see Gritsik 2009, 334). Drahomanov also worked on “Ukrainian Cossacks, Tatars and Turks” (“Про українських козаків, татар та турків”, 1876), and compared, in order to highlight similarities, Ukrainian written and oral literature with Slovak literature (*Between West and East. Comparative Essays on Ukrainian Folk Literature / Між Заходом і Сходом. Порівняльні нариси української народної словесності*), but also with literatures of North Asia and the Caucasus. The corpus he analyses is extremely wide: he writes texts about Alexander the Great, Ferdowsi, and Shakespeare, but also attempts to compare “variants” of Russian, Polish, German, and Breton ballads, constantly adopting an “embryological” comparative perspective. But, for him, the search for similarities is only a means to determine if there is a common substance, or if the links between peoples and traditions are only the result of cross-cultural contacts. Another interesting article is “Goethe and Shakespeare translated in Ukrainian”, where the author defends the Ukrainian language: he writes that these translations prove that the Ukrainian language is rich. This article was an

answer to Moscow critics who in 1883 banned these Panteleimon Kulish's translations.

Of course, all this does not please Russian authorities, so that Drahomanov has to emigrate, first in Hungary, then in Vienna, and finally in Geneva. But before being dismissed from the University for his "political activity", he published a comparatist work on "Russian, Great Russian, Ukrainian, and Galician Literature" ("Література російська, великоруська, українська и галицька", 1873-1874) in the Galician newspaper *The Truth* (*Правда*). In 1876, he also founded the magazine *The Association* (*Асоціація*), in tribute to *The Community* (*Громада*), banned by the Russian Empire. And in 1878, on the occasion of a literary congress in Paris, he took the floor to speak about Ukrainian literature, which was proscribed by the Russian government. He reacted there to the Ems Ukase (a decree issued by Alexander II in the spring of 1876, which reinforced the prohibitions concerning the use of Ukrainian language in the Russian Empire). Drahomanov then wrote many comparatist texts, some of which had a very revolutionary and sarcastic dimension: *Dyonisus III of Saint Petersburg and Plato II of Moscow. A Comparative-Historical Game of Nature* (*Діонізії III Санкт-Петербурзькій и Платонъ II Московській. Сравнительно-историческая игра природы*, 1882), and *Herzen, Bakunin, Chernichevskij and the Polish Question* (*Герцен, Бакунин, Чернышевский и польский вопрос*, 1906) are very significant studies. And it is also interesting to mention that, at another congress in Paris in 1889, Drahomanov asserted that any reading of a Western literary corpus should be made in comparison with Eastern literary traditions, since European tales often have their origins in Asia.

We would like to mention two other thinkers in this context: Ivan Franko and Aleksandr Vesselovsky. "It is the memory of the work of Drahomanov", writes Franko to Vesselovsky, "which led me to be interested in the new science of literary comparison" (see Gritsik 2009, 330). But one of Franko's main sources is Vesselovsky himself: the latter is one of the first Russian "comparatists", and he was criticized by Russian formalists for having been influenced by Western bourgeois thinking. Franko, like Vesselovsky, has traveled extensively in Europe, and his work on the Western and Eastern "influences" in storytelling is particularly interesting: let us mention "Echoes of Greek and Latin Literature in Ruthenian Literature" ("Echa literary greckiej i lacińskiej w piśmennictwie ruskim", written in Polish in 1895) and "Ruthenian Theater in Galicia" ("Руський театр у Галичині", 1885). But the concept of "influence" was supplanted by concepts such as transformation, contact, etc. Ivan Franko's typological and ethnic studies modernize the methods.

In 1905, he wrote an essay entitled “Bilingualism and duplicity” (“Двоязичність і дволичність”), introducing a psychological dimension in comparative studies.

So, the second Ukrainian comparatism studies similarities rather than oppositions. It tries to unite “Russian” peripheries against Russian cultural imperialism, and to create a continuum between West and East, between Europe and Asia, in order to reduce Russian cultural power.

Ukrainian comparatism is practiced as an antidote to Russian imperialist discourse, which, in order to justify the cultural occupation of Ukraine, also plays in its own way on the idea of fraternity of peoples and on the myth of Kievian Rus'. The USSR did not forget all this, and notably insisted on the fraternity of peoples, which is the base of Soviet patriotic, anti-bourgeois and anti-cosmopolitanist propaganda. The concept of “national literature” is “invalidated” in the Soviet context: the concepts of “Soviet literature” and of “literature of the peoples of the USSR” are far from being confused. The “literature of the peoples of the USSR” can produce “ideologically flawed” works, while “Soviet Literature” produces only “ideologically perfect” works, which convey the communist ideal. In the USSR, comparatism is considered as an emanation of bourgeois cosmopolitanism. It is forbidden, even if researchers gather clandestinely, and even if Ukrainian emigrants, like Biletsky in his work entitled “Ukrainian Literature among other Literatures of the World”, try, through comparative studies, to place Ukrainian literature in the map of world literature (see Nalyvaiko 2009, 437). And, from the 1970s, comparatists have been studying the imagological exchanges between Eastern and Ukrainian literatures on the one hand and between Western and Ukrainian literatures on the other. So, even if, during the Soviet period, comparative literature was banished (the literatures of Soviet peoples being suspected not to be “orthodox” enough, there was only one literature, Soviet literature, and comparative literature was regarded as a bourgeois discipline), some Ukrainian researchers tried to develop an “imagological” approach, in order to fight against the Russian use of “influences” theory, whose aim was to highlight the so-called influence of Russian culture on “peripheral” territories.

And this leads us to the last period in Ukrainian comparative literature's history. A very important point is the proximity between comparative literature and literary theory; and a particularly important work is the book entitled *Comparative Literary Theory* (Порівняльне літературознавство, 2008). This title is interesting because of its ambiguity, and in some ways because of its inaccuracy: the book is a handbook devoted to the methods of comparative literature, the purpose of

which is to give philology students effective tools to deepen their knowledge of “national” and “foreign” literatures in intercultural context, through a prism of contactual, typological, generic, and intermedial approaches. In this context, the “contactual” method plays a significant role, insofar as it uses a prism of concepts that can be described as “relativistic”. The typological approach of literary comparisons proposes structural and contextual parallels between literary works: it deals with comparative poetics as well as with synchronistic and diachronic typology; it is, therefore, in this field that the preponderance of structuralism is most important. As for generic comparison, the main question that occupies the researchers is the link between genre and national identity. And the intermedial approach is a way of apprehending literature in a “global village” context, and of attenuating the categorical distinctions between “national” literatures and “universal” literature. We could almost say that intermediality is a vector of interculturality in Ukrainian comparatist theory: its aim is to go beyond all divisions and to produce a science without borders. In Ukraine, this comparatist position is gaining more and more success, as it is a relief for researchers tired of the politicization of all literary disciplines. Contemporary Ukrainian comparatism has six keywords: contacts, typology, genres, intermediality, post-colonialism and imagology. Ukrainian comparatism is not anti-colonial anymore, it is post-colonial—which means that it does not try anymore to fight for peripheral cultures against Russian imperialism. Ukrainian contemporary comparatists try to promote a polycentered system, and to take into consideration not only the political connexions, but also the non-political links between the objects they study.

So, there are four main periods in Ukrainian comparatism’s history: first a period of national renaissance, when comparative thinking was used to highlight national specificities; then, a second period when the aim of comparatism was to highlight continuities between peripheries on the one hand and between Ukraine and Europe on the other, in order to encourage thought to move away from the “central” ideal; the third period, during the Soviet era, led to the development of an imagological approach, in order to go beyond the theory of Russian influence; finally, nowadays, Ukrainian comparatists try to depoliticize their discipline, and to develop an “objective” approach to literary contacts and exchanges.

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PART II
Comparative Literature
and Cross-Cultural Studies

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPARING IN FINLAND. A METHOD IN A MOVING FIELD

HARRI VEIVO

It would not be exaggerated to say that a comparative perspective has often if not always characterised discussions on literature in Finland, or even that Finnish literature was born from a comparison. In 1817, Carl Axel Gottlund, a young Finnish student at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, wrote the following lines:

[I]f one could find the energy to collect old folk songs and to use them to form a structured whole, no matter whether it would be an epic, a drama or something else, it could lead to a new Homer, Ossian or *Nibelungenlied*; and the Finnish nation, lightened by the shine and honour of its originality, conscious of itself and embellished by the halo of its progress, would provoke the amazement of the present and the future (cited in Honko 1987, 132).

Gottlund was thinking about folk stories, legends and poems that were still part of a living tradition of oral literature in the eastern and northern regions of Finland. The tradition had attracted scientific interest since the seventeenth century, and especially after Henrik Gabriel Porthan's research at the Academy of Turku at the end of the eighteenth century. The rise of romanticism and the annexation of Finland by the Russian empire in 1809 created, however, the conditions for a new perception of the corpus of stories and poems that had already been compiled and were still collected by hard-working enthusiasts. It became possible to imagine that they could be used to reconstruct an epic poem that would equal the great European classics and thus legitimate the Finnish nation's right to exist. The poem would be comparable to Homer and Ossian, that is, it would at the same time be similar and different—about heroes, exploits and myths, but in a way that would celebrate the particularity of the Finnish people.

The project was realised by Elias Lönnrot who published the *Kalevala* in 1835 (Gottlund also gave a try, but his *Runola* from 1840 never became a success). The epic became the cornerstone of a national awakening that finally leads to the creation of a nation-state. Perhaps equally important was the production of the poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg, who wrote in Swedish, the other national language of the country. A connection of similarity and difference, of affiliation and affirmation of independence with the western neighbour and former ruler has been active ever since his days of glory. In Finland like in other European countries where aspirations for autonomy or independence were fuelled by national romanticism in the nineteenth century, the comparative perspective has been very much present all along. Paradoxically, the very particularity of the nation—its traditions and its “soul”—was able to blossom only in an international field of similarities and differences in relation to other nations; the protagonists engaged in discussions in this field were often true cosmopolites, sharing the same philosophical ideas and the same intellectual heritage (see Thiesse 1999).

In Finland a comparative international perspective was also crucial for the founding of modern literary studies as a discipline. When discussions on the creation of a professorship of aesthetics and modern (*i.e.*, different from classic) literature started in the 1820s at the University of Helsinki (formerly the Academy of Turku), the University of Uppsala and other foreign institutions were proposed as models to follow (Reitala 1990, 2-3; Varpio 1990, 37-40). The chair was established in 1852 and the first professor, Fredrik Cygnaeus, was appointed two years later. Given that “aesthetics” covered all the arts, the field was potentially huge. In a context of growing national consciousness, and especially of the growing publication of Finnish literature—either written in Finnish or in Swedish—, Cygnaeus’s work focalised, however, on national themes and questions, and his discipline soon became a crucial channel for discussion on these topics. While this link was to remain strong well into the twentieth century, it did not prevent Cygnaeus and his followers from discussing foreign authors as well. His inaugural lecture was about the relation between historical drama and reality with examples for France and Germany, and one of his most famous lecture courses was on Shakespeare, Lessing and Schiller (Reitala 1990, 7-8). Thus professors who later occupied Cygnaeus’s chair always had a double function. They were at the same time cosmopolitan specialists of European literature publishing actively abroad, and intellectuals engaged in the construction and description of the value system of their own country, using their knowledge of “universal” values in the project of cultivating the nation.

While Finnish literature and literary studies in Finland have thus thrived in a comparative framework that has offered for researchers a gratifying yet extremely demanding role, this does not mean that the comparative method would have been dominant in research. Literary studies in Finland has inherited much of its conceptual frame from the German tradition of *Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft*, although the French tradition of *littérature comparée* has also been present (Korhonen 2012, 80-81). In the list of 54 nominations to positions of professor or associate professor (in Finnish “dosentti”, comp. German “Dozent”) between 1854 and 1990 at the University of Helsinki, “comparative” appears only twice in the definition of the discipline, and both times in the form of “comparative history of literature” (Reitala 1990, 45-47). The publications in Helsinki have traditionally focused on English, German and French literature, but Finnish and even Provencal, Latin and Ancient Greek authors and works have also been studied (Riikonen 2016, 67; Varpio 1990, 83-84). The description of the field the chair is dedicated to in 2018 is “comparative literature” in English, but *yleinen kirjallisuustiede* in Finnish, a translation of *Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft*. The situation at the other universities is not significantly different. Only two universities use “comparative literature” as a name for their discipline, while the majority prefers broader concepts such as “literary studies” or simply “literature”. This preference is visible also in the name of the 1927 founded Finnish Literature Research Society (*Kirjallisuudentutkijain seura* in Finnish, *Sällskapet för litteraturforskning i Finland* in Swedish). The scope is large enough to welcome any method, period or language. What, then, is the role of comparative literature in Finnish literary studies today? I will approach the topic from two angles: firstly, by looking at how comparative literature and literary research in general have been defined in university textbooks since the 1990s, and secondly, by analysing the interrelated discussions on the role of comparative literature in the global field and on the role of literary studies in Finland today.

1. Defining (or not) comparative literature in university textbooks

In Finland, textbooks, companions and manuals intended for the university level fulfil the basic function of providing material for courses at the BA level (often as obligatory reading for exams). As such, they seek to provide a complete and balanced view of the general field of literary studies. They are often collective works that gather together researchers of the older and the younger generation, the latter playing quite often a

significant role. In this sense, they show how conceptions of literature and of literary studies evolve in relation to the generational dynamics in the academia in Finland and in relation to the paradigm shifts and “turns” in the international field of literary studies, these paradigm shifts often playing a role in struggles over power and legitimation.

Marja-Leena Palmgren’s *Introduction to Literary Studies (Johdatus kirjallisuutieteeseen)* from 1986 is an ambitious, 472 pages long work, providing a conceptual approach to the different definitions of literature and to the different genres (epic, novel, lyrical poetry, and drama—the chapter on the last topic is written by Riitta Pohjola). While the examples in the chapters consecrated to the genres provide a glimpse at historical evolution, the discussion in the book is largely driven by theory. Palmgren mobilises a large corpus of theories and methods of the twentieth century to define what literature and literary studies are. Russian formalism, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roman Jakobson and Youri Lotman constitute one thread in this work, as do T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards and the New Criticism, French structuralism, Umberto Eco’s semiotics and communication theories, Marxism, Hans Robert Jauss’s reception theory and Monroe C. Beardsley’s aesthetic theory, and many other Finnish and foreign names. For the author, this plurality of approaches is necessary since literature does not have an immutable and ahistorical being; rather, it has fuzzy moving frontiers and a dynamic definition that changes according to time and place. The subject of literary studies thus cannot be constituted by literary texts alone but has to take into consideration also their mechanisms of production, distribution and communication, and the conditions that determine these mechanisms, as well as their aesthetic function, and other connections to society. Literature is a “composite subject” (Palmgren 1986, 34) and literary studies “a field of problems” (*ibid.*, 31).

Within this frame, comparative literature is defined as one of the four main theoretical approaches alongside with theories of literature focusing on communication, consciousness and autonomic structure (*ibid.*, 140-156). Comparative literature is an approach focusing on the internal relations in literature and on literary traditions. It may have a narrow scope limiting the research on relations within one national literature and within one period only, or a large scope focusing on relations between different traditions or between literature and the other arts. It may seek to explain the internal evolution of literature understood as a closed system, or then to analyse how literature evolves within a bigger historical context. The different options are justified by theoretical approaches to literary conventions, genres, intertextuality and reception offered by Russian

formalism, Prague structuralism, Bakhtin and Jauss among others. For Palmgren, their work continues the reflection on the historical nature of literature that emerged after the seventeenth-century quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, and was further conceptualised by Herder and French researchers in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century has brought forth a more detailed understanding of the functioning of literary texts and traditions, and thus also more possibilities for comparative literature as a discipline or an approach. While the potential field of study is thus very vast, Palmgren also offers a definition of comparativism as a method of analysis based on the comparison of literary works and traditions, and on inferences that can be drawn from the relations of influence, similarity and difference such comparison reveals. This method can be combined with other methods and it can be used both in literary historical research and in defining ahistorical paradigms of style and form. In this sense, comparativism has a double function for literary history as a heuristic method and as a “critical challenger” (*ibid.*, 155).

Palmgren gives comparative literature a much larger role than, for example, the authors of the 1983 *Methods in Literary Studies* (*Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen menetelmiä*), where comparison is only discussed as a method in two chapters consecrated to stylistics and the history of ideas in literary studies (see Enkvist 1989, 69-73 and Nevala 1989, 130-132). From a retrospective point of view, Palmgren’s willingness to include very different theories in her discussion of comparative literature may be read as a symptom of a mutation in the field of literary research and humanities in Finland in the 1980s. While the 1950s and 1960s had been dominated by the New Criticism, and the 1970s by Marxist approaches, the 1980s was a decade of increasing plurality. Different versions of structuralism and semiotics as well as reception theories and cultural and gender studies became more and more powerful, challenging the prevailing disciplinary boundaries and definitions of subject matter. In 1986, it was still possible to try to cover these emerging views and challenges by one notion, which in Palmgren’s case was comparative literature. In the 1990s, this became more and more difficult. On the one hand, comparative literature and comparativism tended to disappear from textbooks and manuals that were based on recent theoretical paradigms only (see for example Kantokorpi 1995); on the other hand, the very notion of “literature” as subject of research was declared as ideologically suspect and irrelevant, and replaced by a larger body of cultural texts (see for example Lehtonen 1998). This has led to a situation where comparative literature, comparatism and comparison as

method are practically absent from later books that can be compared with Palmgren's.

The 2003 *Basic Concepts in Literary Studies* (*Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen peruskäsitteitä*) edited by Outi Alanko and Tiina Käkälä-Puumala offers an introduction to literary studies based on twelve chapters that analyse notions and discussions mapping the field from different angles such as literary history, reading and interpretation, genre, story and plot, and different conceptions of the author. The first and last chapter aim to frame the book with overviews dealing with "The Field of Literary Studies" by Kuisma Korhonen, and "Main Approaches in Literary Studies" by Eva Maria Korsisaari. Comparative literature is mentioned only in passing in Korhonen's chapter, in a discussion on the history of literary studies in Finland and on the power institutions have in defining the field (Korhonen 2003, 15 and 30-31), and in Susanna Suomela's chapter on theme and thematic criticism in a discussion on the heuristic value of the comparative method, analysing how themes move synchronically and diachronically between texts (Suomela 2003, 143 and 153). This does not mean that comparisons would be totally absent from the book. Janna Kantola's discussion on symbols and metaphors in poetry, for example, draws parallelisms between authors such as Chinese eleventh-century poet Ouyang Xiu, Spanish modernist Federico García Lorca and the Finnish 1960s experimentalist Pentti Saarikoski (Kantola 2003, 278-282). The authors often cite the same names as Palmgren in her discussion on comparative literature (such as the Russian formalists, Bakhtin and Jauss). The underlying logic is, however, significantly different. In Alanko and Käkälä-Puumala's book, literary texts are submitted either to a technical analysis using concepts such as plot and implied reader, or to a contextual reading that pays attention to institutions, discourses and power structures. While the former approach shows the lasting effect of text-oriented research championed in different ways by Russian formalism, New Criticism, structuralism and classical narratology, the latter points to the influence of deconstruction, cultural studies, and more recent approaches such as queer and postcolonial studies. In this context, comparison is subsumed under notions such as intertextuality and genre and does not exist as a method or a field of study in its own right.

Introduction to Literary Analysis (*Johdatus kirjallisuusanalyysiin*) claims explicitly to follow the tradition of *Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen peruskäsitteitä* and *Johdatus kirjallisuutieteeseen*, but it does so with a different kind of a structuring principle. The editors Aino Mälikalli and Liisa Steinby have divided the book into four chapters dedicated to

literature and literary studies, narrative literature, poetry, and drama. Each chapter discusses notions that belong to the common stock of analytical tools in the field; concepts pertaining to one theoretical paradigm only have been left out. The approach is fundamentally historical. Not only is literature a historical construction for the authors, but so are also analytical and descriptive concepts that cannot be understood without a diachronic perspective. The task of literary studies is to explain what “literature”, “novel” and, for example, “nineteenth-century Afro-American women’s *Bildungsroman*” are, which texts belong to which class, and what their conditions of production are (Steinby 2013, 17). This work presupposes a hermeneutic dialogue between the theory and analysis of individual texts, where the former helps to clarify the latter and the latter leads to a questioning of the former. In this process, distinctions between the general and the particular, and the objective and the subjective are blurred. The fundamentally historical nature of literature means also that it cannot be fully described by one theory only. Different approaches define the subject in their manner and together produce a series of descriptions that are in some respect fundamentally incompatible.

Even though Mäkikalli and Steinby’s book does not discuss comparative literature and the comparative method *per se*, their description and conceptualisation of literature and literary studies are important for the topic. As the short historical overview with the definitions of chairs and departments in the introduction and the analysis of Palmgren’s book above show, comparative literature and the comparative method have been present in literary studies in Finland, but without having a strong disciplinary status. Even the scholars who have used the comparative method, occupied chairs with the word “comparative” in the title or have graduated from a department of comparative literature, have used other methods and published works on topics like a single author’s production that do not require a comparative approach. It seems to be generally accepted that literature resists any single theoretical explanation as Steinby underlines. Because of this, like any other approach or method, comparative literature cannot have an immutable status and a stable disciplinary place. Yet this special, undefinable historical nature of literature can only be understood with a comparative mindset, even though comparison would not have an important role in the analysis of individual texts, authors or discourses.

2. Discussions on literary studies and comparative literature in the beginning of the twentieth century

Alanko and Käkälä-Puumala's and Mälikalli and Steinby's books were published in a period of transformations in literary studies, the humanities and the Finnish system of higher education. As in many other countries, universities were put under pressure as politicians started to consider higher education institutions more and more as providers of innovation and a skilled workforce in emerging fields of economy and industry, and less and less as places for autonomous scientific work and the education of young citizens. The keywords used in the reshaping of the field were globalisation, competitiveness and the digital revolution. This has spurred a discussion on the role of literary research in society and on its topics, methods and public. The main sites for the discussion were the scholarly revues *Yearbook of Literary Research Society* and its successor *The Key (Avain)*, both published by the Finnish Literature Research Society. They were mainly addressed to professionals in literary studies, but independently of the period or language domain they specialised in. A new interest for comparative literature appears in this context.

In her 2001 article "Is the Identity of Literary Studies Running Away?" ("Onko kirjallisuudentutkimuksen identiteetti karussa?"), Päivi Lappalainen identifies a series of challenges literary studies have to face in the new millennium (Lappalainen 2001, 162-165). Firstly, the very notion of "literature" has been submitted to critical analysis, which has led to the dismantling of the canon and to the end of the era when classic texts were the privileged objects of literary studies. New canons have been proposed, the divide between high and low has disappeared, and value judgements no longer discriminate between genres but rather between worthy and unworthy examples of a large variety of genres and sub-genres. The number of theoretical approaches and methods has also increased. Simultaneously, and as a consequence, the status of literature in society has changed as it is no longer understood as art, but rather as just one cultural system of representation among others. At the same time, the public of literary texts has been fragmented, as readers' attention is divided between a larger set of media than before. In this situation, Lappalainen argues, literature no longer provokes debates, and newspaper criticism runs the risk of being reduced to product marketing. Given that the nation has also lost its role as the "natural" frame for cultural production and that the role of the European civilisation in the global scale has been highly criticized, it is clear that literary studies can no longer

claim to function in an unproblematic way as a site for the construction of national symbols and the communication of universal western values.

The changes in policies of higher education have also pushed Finnish researchers to publish more in English and to orient their work to an international public of specialists. “Publish or perish” has been the rule from the 1990s onwards and prestigious peer-reviewed journals with high impact factors are almost the only goal. While publishing abroad is by no means new in the humanities in Finland, its importance has increased dramatically. This has made it difficult for literary scholars to fulfil their traditional role as active participants in the literary field and in public debates in their own country. Being at the cutting edge of international research is time-consuming—especially in a field where paradigms shifts and “turns” follow each other in an ever-increasing pace (see Keskinen 2012 and Veivo 2013). Yet this situation may also be advantageous for literary studies and comparative literature. Lieven Ameel has pointed out that a large number of the paradigms that have become influential in the human and social sciences either originate from literary studies or are compatible with its methods and aims. Notions and perspectives derived from narratology and its sub-fields are used in sociology, anthropology, economics and urban studies, for example, and the use of symbols, metaphors and narratives in politics and marketing has not decreased. While literary scholars have not been active in these interdisciplinary transfers, their competencies may prove to be useful in many ways when some traditional conceptions on the limits of the profession are challenged (see Ameel and Ikonen 2013, 69-70).

A discussion on the current state of comparative literature emerges briefly in this context in the autumn 2014 issue of *Avain*. The editors Sanna Nyqvist and Merja Polvinen observe that the field has moved from the traditional comparative approach based on literatures of different languages towards a more challenging conception of research that questions the role of national corpuses as the self-evident basis for study, and pays more attention to theoretically grounded parallelisms and comparisons between literature, arts and other discourses. This new conception lacks a clearly defined object and a well-structured method; it is characterised by questioning and even by the dramatic consciousness of a crisis. The authors that Nyqvist and Polvinen (2014, 3-4) mention are Robert Weinger and his idea of comparative literature as a discipline at crossroads, Franco Moretti and his belittling view of the field as a modest intellectual endeavour geographically limited on the banks of the Rhine only, and Fedwa Malti-Douglas and her vision of comparative studies as an unlimited field for the encounter arts and discourses. The interest of the

new, broader conception of comparative literature in Finland lies in its capacity to provide tools and a federating notion for common projects that go across disciplinary and institutional boundaries that structure the field of literary studies. Seen this way, comparative literature can be defined as research that looks at the same time far away and near, seeks to understand the specificity of a given text and its transformations in different cultures and medias, and cultivates critical awareness of its own theories and concepts (*ibid.*, 6).

A similar call for cross- or interdisciplinary approaches is made by Kaisa Kaakinen (2014), who also endorses Nyqvist and Polvinen's opinion on the importance of critical reflection on the discipline's own premises and the idea of comparative literature as an approach that provides the possibility to cross traditional borders and combine profound cultural and linguistic competencies with new kinds of questionings. She argues that the difficulty of defining specific methods and research objects that characterise the field may actually be an advantage when the aim is to understand how literature or "literariness" function in a global frame of reference. Liisa Steinby (2014) likewise takes the age of cultural globalisation as the point of departure in her reflection of comparatism, but she proposes a more critical view of some of the new paradigms. Steinby argues that Franco Moretti's method of distant reading fails to offer readers the possibility to clearly understand the validity and the signification of research results. The quantitative and topographical data based on meta-level sources rather than the actual literary texts give the researcher practically unlimited possibilities to underline phenomena in an arbitrary fashion, independently of what actually matters in the original texts. Steinby is equally critical of David Damrosch's project of world literature. While Damrosch's interest in how literary texts live in translation outside of their original cultural context is valuable, his vision of the researcher of world literature as a generalist who works uniquely on translations is unacceptable. It results too often in an understanding of the text on the receiving culture's terms, which is a form of cultural imperialism. Steinby points out that Damrosch's analysis of Aztec poetry as an expression of brutal government and of the determination of a conquered people contextualises the text with abstract terms that belong to Damrosch's and not the Aztecs' vision of the topic. Alterity is thus reduced before any real encounter with a foreign culture.

What Steinby proposes instead of Moretti's and Damrosch's recent projects is a new valorisation of the interest for world literature in the writings of historical figures such as Herder, Goethe and August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel. She calls for an approach that would combine a

context-sensitive reading that was typical for the tradition of philology with hermeneutic reflexivity and with critically self-aware theorisation. The two first mentioned elements offer the possibility for an understanding of the text and the alterity it mediates, while the last may provide the possibility to reflect on research questions and concepts on a general level. If comparative literature aims for a synthesis of world literature, this can, according to Steinby, only happen in the form of a synthesis that is inductive, hypothetic and elliptic, constituted of provisional fragments that research produces.

3. Comparing in a moving field

As pointed out at the beginning of the article, academic literary studies in Finland were established following the example of universities abroad. Finnish literature also emerged within a comparative perspective where texts belonging to the tradition of European literature served as models. This sensibility towards other cultures—or rather towards a shared civilizational frame that would transcend national boundaries—is still characteristic of literary studies in the country. Scholars usually have a knowledge of their field that transcends the narrow limits of a single literature or of a single period; it can be characterised as comparative even though it would not explicitly claim to be such. Hence studies of Finnish authors and works very often use theoretical approaches or methods that imply a frame of reference that connects the researcher and his topic with a larger international community and tradition. Let us also not forget that the literature of Finland has always been written in two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. From the very beginning, the dividing line between the foreign and the own, and between the varying forms of own, has been porous.

This may be typical for small nations that occupy second rank positions within large cultural formations. Their cultural field is never stable, but always moving, and all the actors recognize this, even though they may not agree on how to deal with the shaky foundations and flexible boundaries. Processes such as appropriation and resemantisation that combine adaptation with resistance and creation are therefore perhaps more vital in the periphery than in the centre. Comparison as an internalised perspective and a mechanism in self-definition reflects this as well. Would it be exaggerated to say that comparing is surviving?

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CHAPTER SIX

BELGIAN COMPARATISM AT THE CROSSROADS

MICHEL DELVILLE

Belgium is widely considered to be a comparative space *par excellence* by virtue of its historically and institutionally sanctioned multilingualism and multiculturalism. However, it cannot be credited with having produced a specific “school” of comparative studies in literature. Worse, chairs in this field of research have tended to disappear over the last half century, and comparative studies in the land of Maeterlinck, Magritte and Michaux are now in the hands of teachers and researchers either operating individually, or in collaborations across the disciplines. To quote Claude de Grève’s introduction to the special “Belgian” issue of the *Revue de littérature comparée* (2001):

One could argue that many countries are likely to claim the title of “comparatist space” and become the objects of a special issue of the *Revue de littérature comparée*. Readers of this journal are not unaware that teaching and research in comparative literature is developing and becoming more and more popular worldwide, although we must admit that we, comparatists, are operating within a “small world”.¹

He then proceeds to describe the specificities of the *piccolo mondo* of Belgian comparatists as follows:

Why Belgium? Why “Belgium, comparatist space”, since comparative literature does not officially exist in this country as a separate discipline?

¹ Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. “Nombreux, pourrait-on dire, sont les pays susceptibles de revendiquer le titre d’‘espace comparatiste’ et de devenir les objets d’un numéro spécial de la *Revue de littérature comparée*. Les lecteurs de la présente revue n’ignorent pas que l’enseignement et la recherche en littérature comparée se développent et séduisent un peu partout sur la planète, bien qu’il faille admettre que nous, comparatistes, ne formions qu’un ‘petit monde’”. (de Grève 2001, 349)

Indeed, if it is practiced in some universities, it is thanks to the individual efforts of specialists of Romance, Germanic, Slavic, African or other languages and literatures.

But perhaps one is *ipso facto* comparatist when one deals with literature in Belgium. The epithet “comparatist” applies less here to research and teaching than to an auspicious ground for such endeavors, Belgium, for its polyglot specificity and, therefore, the coexistence of several literatures within its boundaries.²

A quick look at the content of the special issue of the journal reveals the ontological and epistemological quandary in which comparatists find themselves whenever they attempt to describe their areas of inquiry and to clarify their relationship with comparative literature as a discipline in its own right, while seeking to reconcile transnational and local perspectives. This is particularly true of Belgian scholars, situated as they are within an always already comparative and multilingual space at the same time as they become confronted with the increasingly complex and intricate realities of globalization in all its various forms.³ The special “Belgian” issue of the *Revue de littérature comparée* hardly addresses those questions. Instead of dealing with comparative subjects *per se*, most of the essays focus on specific writers whose works exhibit international and intercultural features, an approach which rarely ventures beyond the study of influences and connections (*e.g.*, the reception and success story of Georges Rodenbach in Brazil, South American settings in Conrad Detrez’s *Bildungsromane*, Michel de Ghelderode’s collaborations with Flemish theatrical institutions, Emile Verhaeren in translation, the influence of German philosophy on Maurice Maeterlinck, etc.). There are two notable exceptions to the rule. The first one is Jeannine Paque’s (442) article, which considers Italian-Belgian francophone literature as an example of Deleuzian “minor literature,” while insisting on the mediating function

² “Pourquoi la Belgique? Pourquoi ‘la Belgique, espace comparatiste’, alors qu’en tant que discipline à part entière, la littérature comparée n’existe pas officiellement dans ce pays? En effet, si celle-ci est pratiquée dans certaines universités, c’est grâce aux initiatives individuelles de spécialistes de littératures romanes, germaniques, slaves, africaines ou d’autres langues et littératures. Mais peut-être est-on *ipso facto* comparatiste lorsqu’on traite de littérature en Belgique. L’épithète ‘comparatiste’ s’applique moins ici à la recherche et à l’enseignement qu’à un terrain propice à ces derniers, la Belgique, par sa spécificité polyglotte et, de ce fait, par la coexistence de plusieurs littératures en son sein.” (de Grève 2001, 349).

³ Chapter 4 of César Domínguez and Haun Saussy’s *Introducing Comparative Literature: New Trends and Applications* looks at comparative literature within the context of the patterns of acculturation, post- or transculturation and globalization.

between proletarian and “official” culture performed by “rital” writers and their capacity to “turn around a situation of uprooting, to convert their enforced illegitimacy into a combat weapon, into a mutant culture that will energize the most closed spheres.”⁴ The second one is Jean Weisgerber’s contribution to the journal, which offers a broader consideration of Belgian comparatism or, rather, comparatism in Belgium. Weisgerber—himself a foundational figure in Belgian comparatism and author of an important, two volume critical history of *Les Avant-gardes littéraires au XX^e siècle* as well as important books on the Flemish novel—deplores the fact that Belgian comparatists have shown more interest in foreign than Belgian examples and have neglected the study of relationships between the French and Dutch speaking communities. This general disregard for “inter-Belgian” traditions and influences is partly compensated for Weisgerber’s own Brussels-based *Centre d’Étude des Avant-gardes littéraires*, which has led to some substantial research on Belgian avatars of magic realism, on the one hand, and on the Belgian reception and reappropriation of such avant-garde movements as Futurism, Expressionism, Dada and Surrealism, on the other. (Weisgerber’s article ends with a more detailed analysis of the life and works of Belgian multimedia Dadaist writer-artist Clément Pansaers, whom he hails as a paradigmatic example of a polyglot innovator and mediator.)

Laurent Béghin and Hubert Roland (2004, 7) have argued that Belgium’s reputation as a comparatist space “which exceeds metaphors and images (crossroads, balcony, laboratory, etc.) widely expressed intra- and extra-muros about it, is second to none”. They also write that

in the specific field of literary avant-gardes, Jean Weisgerber thus supports the thesis of a singularity of the Belgian [cultural] territory as “land of exchange and transformation”, because of its “key position at the confluence of several cultures”⁵ (*ibidem*).

⁴ “Si ces acteurs arrivent à retourner une situation de déracinement, à convertir leur illégitimité forcée en instrument de combat, en une culture mutante propre à dynamiser les sphères les plus fermées”.

⁵ “La réputation de la Belgique comme espace comparatiste qui dépasse les métaphores et images (carrefour, balcon, laboratoire, etc.) abondamment diffusées intra- et extra-muros à son propos, n’est plus à faire”; “dans le domaine spécifique des avant-gardes littéraires, Jean Weisgerber soutient [...] la thèse d’une singularité de l’espace belge comme ‘terre d’échanges et de transformations’, en raison de sa ‘position clé au confluent de plusieurs cultures’.”

For Béghin and Roland, the term “transformation” is crucial insofar as it suggests “modes of appropriation of original literary or artistic currents from abroad and which imply a transformation of these currents into a gesture of reception” (*ibidem*). Belgian Surrealism, for example, “presents an original variant of French surrealism, while Flemish pictorial expressionism differs from German Expressionism, by mixing in particular the influences of painting Flemish Primitives” (*ibidem*). Such preoccupations echo Weisgerber’s call for a reconsideration of the transformative appropriation of genres and movements within the sphere of Belgian literature and culture. More generally, Béghin’s and Roland’s diagnosis of the current state of Belgian comparative literary studies confirms the fact that recent efforts towards a redefinition of Belgian comparatist studies have been geared towards a reconsideration of the specificity of Belgian literature vis-à-vis other foreign (non-)equivalents.

Weisgerber’s interest in the specifically Belgian mediations of international genres and movements was seminal in that respect⁶, as was Jan Baetens’s⁷ and Michael Kasper’s more recent attempt at “recovering” the history of Belgian Surrealism through their edition and translation of the magazine *Correspondance*, the first Belgian Surrealist “magazine” founded by Paul Nougé, Camille Goemans, and Marcel Lecomte in 1924, the same year as André Breton’s first Surrealist Manifesto. Since that time, Belgian Surrealism has remained one of the European avant-garde’s best-kept secrets. The names of Nougé, Goemans, Louis Scutenaire, Achille Chavée or Fernand Dumont are conspicuously absent from most anthologies and literary histories, and Belgian Surrealism is generally considered to be a non-literary phenomenon, almost systematically confined to the paintings of René Magritte and Paul Delvaux.

Unlike many other Belgian writers who moved to Paris to make a career (the examples of Georges Simenon, Henri Michaux, and many others come to mind), most Belgian Surrealists published their work in their home country, and this may explain their lack of recognition outside a small circle of connoisseurs and specialists: rather significantly, Nougé’s writings first gained international exposure after they were cited and

⁶ More recent examples of like-minded projects I have been involved in include a Belgian-led European program on the neo-avant-garde comprising a more specific sub-project on Dutch-speaking fiction and poetry (see <http://enag.be/>) and an intervarsity project on the Belgian photonovel (see <https://www.photolit-brain.com>).

⁷ An important promoter and practitioner of comparative studies in Belgium, on both sides of the linguistic border.

quoted by Breton in the latter's own publications. Perhaps it is once again the sense of being "minor" in the Deleuzian way, of being relegated to the margins of francophone culture that accounts, at least in part, for the radical, convulsive spirit that characterizes the birth and development of Belgian Surrealism throughout the history of the Belgian counterculture, from the above-cited Clément Pansaers to Noël Godin, the now world-famous *entarteur* who hit Bill Gates with a cream pie in the late 1990s.

Paul Nougé belongs to the first generation of Belgian Surrealists, a Brussels-based group that also included René Magritte and André Souris, one of the very few musicians associated with the movement. Nougé's own poetry is alternately lyrical, scientific, dialectic, polemical, erotic, and analytical. Many of his writings are informed by his scientific background (he was trained as a chemist), and some have seen in the tacking dialectics of his prose poetry a prefiguration of the theory of complex systems. In one of his fragments, Nougé explains that "poetry offers the singular spectacle of analytical thought deploying itself, deploying itself against analysis". One implication of this is that his writing tends to undermine rational discourse from within and thereby distances itself from the French cult of automatic writing.

Nougé's suspicion of automatic writing, and his rejection of consensual accounts of the dialectics of the conscious and the unconscious mind, go hand in hand with a critique of traditional assumptions of poetico-lyrical sincerity, immediacy, spontaneity and transparency which automatic writing tended to reinforce. As Baetens and Kasper (2015, 32) have remarked, Nougé advocated a kind of writing which

does not invent from scratch with the help of automatism, dream-inspired stories or documents, chance operations or gamelike devices, but that transforms existing language, preferably using its most ossified and stereotypical forms, for they are the ones that are most dangerous to free spirits, and that transforms it by applying specific rules, tailor-made for specific circumstances and aiming at specific effects and consequences.

Nougé's and Goemans's respective attacks against the anti-rhetorical postures adopted by Breton (their attachment to rhetoric was inherited from Jean Paulhan and Paul Valéry) were mitigated by their dedication to a poetics of disjunction, division, and discontinuity, which breaks with the smooth finish of belletrist ideals while, at the same time, complicating the syllogistic movement of classical discourse by allowing it to engage a critical dialogue with itself.

As the tracts of *Correspondance* show, Nougé's proto-Situationist strategies of plagiarism, appropriations, disfigurations and *détournements*

extend to the very “fabric” of syntax. Such strategies are not only linked with his distrust of the alleged freedom of automatism and chance operations favoured by Breton *et al.* They also characterize *Correspondance*’s relationship to the political at large, as reflected in its repeated attacks on personality cults (alongside Breton and other French surrealists, Valéry, Paulhan, Larbaud and Drieu La Rochelle all became the objects of attack in *Correspondance*’s iconoclastic poetics); one thinks, for example, of Goemans’s suggestion that Aragon’s politics are defeated by the “disappointing dexterity” of his writing in “Louis Aragon and the Return, Perhaps, of Green 10” (such is the title of tract BLUE 11). From a generic perspective, the magazine’s commitment to forms of collective, collaborative “poetic action” found a most efficient and pervasive manifestation in the epistolary convolutions of *Correspondance*.

In a period where contemporary experimental writing seems polarized between the extremes of conceptualist, “uncreative” writing à la Kenneth Goldsmith, on the one hand, and transparent political gestures of slam and other forms of identity poetics, on the other, the language-oriented shock tactics and anti-institutional impulses of Nougé’s project seem more relevant than ever to an understanding of the current debates around the articulation of poetic language and the social space of political choice. This is especially true of a project whose sense of urgency is conveyed through a self-effacing medium which not only eludes traditional channels of dissemination of literary texts (including small presses and self-printed pamphlets) but goes as far—in the case of *Correspondance*’s peculiar use of mail art—as addressing unconsenting readers. For audiences unfamiliar with the complexities and paradoxes of Belgian Surrealism, the uncompromising radicalism of such experiments returns us to the origins of the historical avant-garde and the so-called Revolution of the Word in a way which enacts the interpenetration of the textual and the ideological, yet denies that poets ought to subordinate textuality to political expediency. At a time when comparative literature arguably more than ever needs to redefine itself vis-à-vis its main “competitors” old and new—which include literary history, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, area studies, ecocriticism, literary theory, world literature, interliterary studies, distant reading, film studies, translation studies, interdisciplinary studies and transmedial studies⁸, as well as many other related branches

⁸ The University of Liège’s Interdisciplinary Center for Applied Poetics (Centre Interdisciplinaire de Poétique Appliquée) (see <http://labos.ulg.ac.be/cipa/>) embodies the interdisciplinary “turn” in comparative studies. It was founded in 2002 to create an environment where members from all the departments of the

and sub-fields—these considerations have become more urgent than ever. They should be heeded by whoever cares to counter accusations that comparatists are “dinosaurs from a liberal-humanist prehistory” (Saussy 2006, 231) and endeavours to push comparative literature and poetics towards goals and methods which, as Earl Miner (1990, 5) once wrote, “clearly involve[...] something more than comparing two great German poets, and something different from a Chinese studying French literature or a Russian studying Italian literature”.

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Faculty of Arts and Letters could gather to discuss topics which often lie outside the range of individual disciplines and require diverse kinds of expertise and perspectives. Its main goal was and still is to provide a space to discuss the prospects for development of transdisciplinary studies in a way that encourages exchanges between experts in literature, the visual arts, musicology, and cultural history to get together, compare notes and share their information and experience with each other. Since its creation, CIPA has hosted ten international conferences and established programs that support faculty and student research interests that range from the relationships between poetry and music to literate technologies, the political avant-gardes, found footage, the poetics of the detail and the aesthetics of the mosaic.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**COMPARISON IN A
CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT.
AN OVERVIEW OF COMPARATIVISM
IN LUXEMBOURG**

JEANNE GLESENER

Presenting an overview of the state and history of comparativism in Europe, as this volume proposes to do, highlights the extent to which the establishment of traditions and approaches in comparative literature varies according to different European academic contexts. These variations can be explained by various factors, with the key elements being the state and history of university structures, the priority accorded to comparative literature in curricula, and openness towards other philologies. These extra-disciplinary factors can all greatly influence the situation of comparativism, as is particularly evident in the context tackled by this article.

As a multilingual country with two official languages (French and German) and one national language (Luxembourgish), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg should provide favourable conditions for comparative work to flourish. Unlike other countries such as Belgium or Switzerland whose populations consist of distinct linguistic communities, Luxembourg has a single trilingual community (Fehlen 2015, 24). This multilingual set-up is further magnified by the number of citizens with a migrant background (approximately 46 % of the population) who add Italian, Portuguese and Slavic languages to their linguistic repertoire. In addition to its distinctive linguistic situation, the country's geocultural location between Belgium, France and Germany and its broadly stable migration patterns since the late nineteenth century have resulted in the country laying claim to a hybrid culture born both of cross-border contact and exchange and of the migration of cultures. However, despite these virtually ideal linguistic and cultural conditions, comparative literature as a discipline is currently lacking institutionalisation and the number of genuine comparatists remains low. This does not mean that comparativism is entirely absent

from the Luxembourg context—in fact, quite the opposite. As Dutch comparatist Geert Lernout notes, in contact cultures, *i.e.* in smaller literary cultures where various national and linguistic cultures come together (he cites the Netherlands, Belgium, Alsace, Switzerland, and Luxembourg as examples),

it is difficult if not impossible to read the national literature without reference to its wider international artistic context, and writers in small countries themselves very often define their own poetics in terms of foreign influences (Lernout 2014, 417).

This survey of comparativism in Luxembourg will examine this gap between the absence of institutional structures for the discipline of comparative literature and paradigmatic comparative activities in Luxembourg literature research. An overview of the existing structures will be followed by a historical outline of research into Luxembourg literature taking a comparative approach. The article will finish by identifying new lines of research opening in the emerging comparative research field of small and minor literatures.

1. Presentation of structures

From a structural perspective, the longstanding lack of institutional roots has prevented the development of discipline-specific theories and methods. Until very recently, although comparative literature formed a part of some literary study programs, there were no chairs, institutes or research programmes devoted to comparative subjects. However, the institutional situation is about to change, as comparative literature's official inclusion in the University of Luxembourg's Institute of Luxembourg Language and Literature will see it finally granted institutional visibility and position.

This delayed development can be attributed to the equally delayed development of the university structures themselves: for example, it should be noted that the University of Luxembourg in its current form only dates from 2003. From 1848—the year in which William II, King of the Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxembourg, gave the country its first liberal constitution—to 1974—when the law establishing the *Centre Universitaire du Luxembourg* was enacted—, the country did not have a university system of its own and was greatly dependent on foreign countries for the university education of students and future academics (see Margue 2013, 62-65).

The literature study programmes offered within structures prior to the creation of the university did not provide for systematic instruction in comparative literature. This could be interpreted as a lack of interest in comparative literature, but can be primarily attributed to the requirement for virtually perfect mastery of foreign languages and an in-depth knowledge of the associated literature. In the absence of a university structure as such and given that an academic career was therefore not an option in Luxembourg, secondary education was the primary profession entered by students of German, English and French literature. The Ministry of Higher Education did not encourage qualifications in comparative literature and reserved the right to refuse to grant them approval. The late development of academic structures combined with the type of qualifications required for admission to the language and literature strand of the national education system are therefore the elements which have caused comparative literature to be absent on an institutional level.

The very few doctoral theses completed in this field are, with few exceptions, almost exclusively conducted in French and Francophone literatures.¹ These theses immediately enable two characteristics of comparative activities to be identified: firstly their proximity to the French school of comparative literature, and secondly Luxembourg literature as a point of comparison.

These preliminary remarks demonstrate that comparative work has for a long time boiled down to individual initiatives (particularly by Romance scholars) which show an interest in the comparative approach but often also combine it with the aim of promoting awareness of Luxembourg literature beyond the country's borders, as will be demonstrated below.

The idea of promoting Luxembourg literature is also reflected in the activities of the *Société luxembourgeoise de littérature générale et*

¹ In chronological order, these theses are F. Wilhelm (1999). *Études sur la littérature luxembourgeoise de langue française* (Université Paris-IV); J. E. Glesener (2009). *La Récupération de l'espace perdu par l'acte d'écriture. Étude comparée de trois auteurs migrants. Kazuo Ishiguro, Zafer Şenocak et Jean Portante* (Université de Provence I); S. Lippert (2010). *Identität und Sprache. Muster der sprachlichen Identitätsbildung und—zerstörung in ausgewählten Texten von Brian Friel, Roger Manderscheid, Heinrich Böll, Samuel Beckett, Georges Perec und W. G. Sebald* (Universität du Luxemburg/Eberhad-Karls-Universität, Tübingen); I. de Toffoli (2011). *La Réception du latin et de la culture antique dans l'œuvre de Claude Simon, Pascal Quignard et Jean Sorrente* (Université du Luxembourg/Université Paris-IV); S. Thiltges (2013). *Paysages silencieux dans le roman réaliste* (Université du Luxembourg/Université de Strasbourg).

comparée (SLLGC). Created in 1980, its illustrious patrons include Yves Chevrel and Manfred Schmeling who advised the society's creators, patronage which does well to highlight the society's desire to demonstrate its links with comparative traditions on both sides of the border. As its name suggests, the SLLGC primarily follows the model of the *Société française de littérature générale et comparée* and uses the same statutes. In a context with few academic structures, it served as a platform for exchange between German, Romance and English studies scholars in Luxembourg. The journal *Revue luxembourgeoise de littérature générale et comparée*, published regularly by the SLLGC since 1980, provided secondary school teachers with an opportunity to undertake academic and scientific activities outside of a school environment. However, the journal was, and still is, also aimed at an audience of international researchers, and alongside contributions² from Manfred Schmeling, Jean Bessière, Pierre Brunel and Marc-Mathieu Münch has also offered articles by Vassiliki Lalagianni (University of Thessaly), Irina J. Ieronova (Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Kaliningrad), Yarema Kravets (Lviv University, Ukraine), Louis Vax (Nancy II University), Jalel El Gabri (Manouba Faculty of Arts, Tunis University) and Peter André Bloch (University of Upper Alsace, Mulhouse). Based on the articles published in the journal, it appears that the most frequently recurring subjects are mythocriticism, thematology, world literature and reception studies. Organising international conferences allows the members to establish and maintain links with international comparatists and to gain a deeper insight into the epistemologies of other literary traditions. Conferences frequently take interdisciplinary topics, such as "Literature and Money" (2002), "Literature and Architecture" (2005), "Synaesthesia of Genres: Writing, Painting, Music" (2008), "Literature and Health" (2016) and "Cultural Ecology and Ecological Cultures in the Greater Region" (2017).

2. Comparative approaches in Luxembourg literature research

As previously stated, one characteristic of comparative literature research in Luxembourg is the presence of Luxembourg literature as a point of comparison. It would also appear that within research into Luxembourg literature, even the earliest studies adopted comparative perspectives.

² All universities' names are given in original.

The very first incidence of comparative work (in truth a form of budding comparativism) dates from 1854 with the publication in Brussels of *The Essay on Luxembourgish Poetry (Essai sur la poésie luxembourgeoise)* by Félix Thyès (1830-1855). Thyès adopts intuitive and transdisciplinary comparativism, relating as he does the situation of poetry in Luxembourgish to other linguistic, literary and social situations. Furthermore, his *Essay* combines metaliterary reflection with cultural anthropology. Reference to other literary cultures is the principle underlying Thyès's method and is clearly highlighted in the author's words, which even touch on the separate development and existence of small literatures:

Today, all literatures are demonstrating a trend towards new horizons. Major literary movements, like the social revolutions with which they have almost always coincided, are remarkable in that they know no borders and their fruitful commotion creates chaos and highlights previously forgotten or ignored nationalities and literatures. It is peculiar to observe how under the influence of these movements, a wealth of dialects which passed through the Middle Ages unnoticed have suddenly become universally established and are seeking to affirm their existence (Thyès 1996, 49).

However, the comparative perspective underlying the *Essay* is not limited to metadiscourse, but also structures the analytical process. Thyès thus primarily examines influence, for example by highlighting references to the fables of La Fontaine and Æsop in the poetry and ballads of the earliest Luxembourgish-language poet Antoine Meyer (1801-1857) or by comparing these to texts by Grandville, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Shakespeare and Schiller. The *Essay* also contains the first hints of an intermedial approach, with the author drawing links between literature and painting.

According to Frank Wilhelm, the foremost specialist in Francophone Luxembourg literature,

the *Essay* launched [Luxembourg] comparativism for two reasons: because it was published abroad in a different sociocultural context to the one it is discussing, and because it is a French-language discussion of an emerging literature, namely that in Luxembourgish (Wilhelm 1998-1999, 81).

The desire to increase the visibility of Luxembourg literature on the international stage also underlies the study *La Langue et la littérature du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* presented by Romance scholar Jules Keiffer (1853-1938) at the Comparative History Congress held in Paris in 1900. The study, subsequently published in Mâcon, was a contribution to the

field of the comparative history of literature which defined the first wave of comparativism in France (see Van Thieghem 1946, 39).

Further signs demonstrating interest in the emerging discipline was the lecture on Leconte de Lisle given by eminent French comparatist Jean-Marie Carré in 1909 (see 41-261) as part of a programme of lectures by local and international experts organised by the Université Populaire de Luxembourg, an educational institution founded in 1904. Carré was already known to local scholars thanks to his articles discussing Goethe's influence on French literature, published in 1908 in the journal *Revue luxembourgeoise: littérature, art, science* (see 1908a, 77-85 and Carré 1908b, 228-235).

The 1950s represented another important stage in the development of comparative research, which from this point onwards would be closely interlinked with research into Luxembourg's cultural history. Researchers were particularly interested in the relationship between Luxembourgish and foreign writers and studies of influence, contact and imagology thus followed. Given the particular emphasis placed on highlighting factual reports, the close links to the positivistic strand of the French comparatist tradition are clear³ (see Pageaux 1994, 10).

At this juncture, it is important to touch upon the work of Tony Bourg (1912-1991), who was one of the first to focus on interliterary relations and whose academic interests would later become dominant research areas in the field of Luxembourg literary history.

With his examination of the relationship between Nikolaus Welter (1871-1951), a German-language writer and historian of literature written in German and Luxembourgish, and Frédéric Mistral, the great Provençal language poet, Bourg instigated what was to become the prosperous domain of influence studies. He in particular analysed the extent to which the literary works of Welter (see 1899 and 1902), the author of two monographs on poets from the Félibrige movement, were influenced by Mistral. "Roumanille, Mistral and Aubanel", Bourg (1959, 3) emphasises,

became models to him, advisors inviting him to do as they did and choose subjects from his country's legendary history, and generally help to create the literary personality of his region, his Grand Duchy. *Siegfried und Melusine* [1900], *Aus alten Tagen* [1900], *Mansfeld* [1912], *Dantes Kaiser* [1922], *Mundartliche und Hochdeutsche Dichtung in Luxemburg* [1929] and many other works, would any of them have existed if Welter had not

³ For the critique of the positivistic approach of the French School, see Wellek [1959] 2009, 161-175.

spent so long with the *Félibres*, if he had not wished to remain true to his Luxembourg just as they remained true to their Provence?

A significant portion of Bourg's academic energies were devoted to demonstrating that Luxembourg, despite its size and despite ignorance of its cultural and literary offerings among those beyond its borders, was nevertheless not cut off from the international literary world.⁴ He therefore initiated a field of research dedicated to retracing foreign writers' visits to and stays in Luxembourg, their relationship with the country, and their contact with local writers. His attention turned towards the literary imagology of the Grand Duchy as found in the books of the Chevalier de Faublas, Victor Hugo, the Goncourt brothers, Jules Verne, Émile Zola, the Marguerite brothers, Maurice Barrès, André Theuriot, Pierre Nothomb, Marcel Proust and Pierre Viallet (Wilhelm 1999, 49).

Bourg would also undertake research into the Colpach circle (see Amis de Colpach 1978; Muller and Wilhelm 1987 and Frisch *et al.* 1994), a place where French, German and Belgian intellectuals, writers and artists met during the 1920s and a key moment in the country's cultural history. Colpach Castle was the home of Emile Mayrisch (1861-1928), one of Europe's most powerful iron barons and the founder of the Franco-German Information and Documentation Committee (CFAID), created in 1926 to help reconcile these two great powers after the First World War. Organised together with his wife, *femme de lettres* Aline Mayrisch de Saint-Hubert (1874-1947), the Colpach circle aimed to promote international accord via the world of culture. Invitees included André Gide, Jean Schlumberger, Jacques Rivière, Henri Michaux, Marie and Théo van Rysselberghe, Alexis Curvers, Anette Kolb, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and Walter Rathenau. Bourg's research was supplemented by the volumes *Hôtes de Colpach—Colpacher Gäste* (1997) and *Kontakte-Kontexte. Deutsch-Luxemburgische Literaturbeziehungen* (1999), both published by the National Literature Center. Focusing on reconstructing contacts and tracking specific influences between international and Luxembourgish intellectuals, this well-established field of inquiry has made a significant contribution to research into Luxembourg's cross-border cultural and literary history.

Studies on Francophone Luxembourg literature represent another pillar of comparatist research, and particular attention should be drawn to the

⁴ Bourg was also fascinated by the idea that Luxembourg's landscapes could have been a source of inspiration for passing writers such as Jules Verne, Emile Verhaeren, Valéry Larbaud and Halldór Kiljan Laxness. (see Frisch *et al.* 1994, 425-468).

work of Rosemarie Kieffer (1932-1994), a writer, literary critic and cultural mediator between Luxembourg and the countries of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union (see Wilhelm 1994, 17-101). As it currently stands, no overview exists of her entire network of international contacts, but in the post-war period she was one of the key figures in promoting Luxembourg literature abroad and in the French-speaking world.

Under the direction of Frank Wilhelm, professor emeritus of French and Francophone literature at the University of Luxembourg, research in this field would become even more firmly established. His work is in a “documentarian vein and falls within the inventory tradition” (Provenzano 2011, 21-33) which characterised research in other French-language contexts during the 1980s, as is the case in his *Dictionnaire de la francophonie luxembourgeoise* published in Pécs (Hungary) and Vienna in 1999. As Wilhelm effectively demonstrated, Francophone literature studies offer a highly useful framework for helping Francophone Luxembourg literature to break out of its isolation. Wilhelm also makes frequent references to Francophone Belgian literature in order to define the specific nature of his object of study. The comparison with the Belgian context allows him to enquire whether Luxembourg authors writing in French feel the same need experienced by their Belgian counterparts to “make their mark by opposing and to establish their identity by differentiating themselves from French literature, or whether they have developed other identity strategies” (Wilhelm 2010, 102).

3. References to the Other and interliterary comparatist approaches in literary historiography

The study of actual facts and contacts flows from the very nature of Luxembourg literature and its literary field. Barely two centuries old, Luxembourg literature is a multilingual literature whose authors write in two, three or even four languages (see Glesener 2013, 35-70). The proximity of borders and even the country’s small size have always promoted cultural contact with neighbouring countries. The literary field is a peripheral field “which is all the more strongly dominated given its small size and the fact that its writers are required to fit into different language fields, none of which is usually their native tongue” (Fehlen 2010, 7). Furthermore, the field is triply peripheral: first to Germany, than to France and thirdly with regard to the isolation of Luxembourgish-language literature, which is itself trapped in its territoriality given that, unlike its

two sister literatures, it has no external system of reference. The heterogeneous nature of the field and its position at a confluence of languages, cultures and literary traditions are such that reference to the Other is paradigmatic.

Orientation and interconnection with German and French literatures has given rise to the metanarrative of reference to the Other. As Germaine Goetzinger (2004, 16) explains,

in establishing the independence of Luxembourg literature, reference to the Other [becomes] a central moment. One seeks to confirm one's own autonomy by relating it to that of others.

If Goetzinger is not the first to address the question of Luxembourg's interrelations with the neighbouring literatures, she is the first to resolutely formulate Luxembourg literature's self-understanding in terms of the intercultural paradigm. By so doing she introduces an important shift by substituting the conventional ontological interrogation about what Luxembourg literature is—Germanness abroad, borderregional minority literature, “Mundartdichtung”, diaspora literature—by questions about how literary communication works in a multilingual microcosm on the periphery of the German and French language areas and how it navigates the field of tension between identity and difference (*ibid.*, 24).

Reference to the Other manifests itself in different ways: on the one hand (as previously mentioned) via orientation and influence in analysing the work of individual authors, and on the other in the form of literary historiography and in particular in relation to models to be adopted, a process which inevitably entails comparatist reflection regarding method (see Glesener 2017, 41-69).

The literary history *Die drei Literaturen Luxemburgs. Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* is of great interest in this respect. Published in 1989 by the German studies scholar Fernand Hoffmann, it has the merit of being the first to present a joint history of three literatures, thus breaking with the tradition of tackling each of the literatures separately. This method of separation reflected the concept of Luxembourg literature as trifold structure—three national literatures in three different languages which were also kept separate on an institutional level.

In his study, Hoffmann applies interliterary comparison to German-language literature, diligently charting the influence of German authors on German-language Luxembourgish authors or the latter's affiliation to major German literary movements. In addition, his approach demonstrates how the evolution of German-language literature is measured against the

literary time of German literature. Building on this comparison, he notes that the former is lagging behind the latter, repeatedly using phrases such as “obligatory belatedness” (Hoffmann 1989, 475) or “a typical lag of around 30 years behind literary activities in the rest of the German speaking world” (*ibid.*, 476).

Hoffmann’s focus on belatedness reveals the centre-periphery thinking underlying his approach. Constructing German literature as the perceived norm and the authoritative frame of literary evolution leads him to judge Luxembourgish literature in German according to the literary time of the major literature. Underlining the belatedness of the Luxembourgish production also translates the belief in the synchronicity of the emergence of literary phenomena in different literatures. As comparative theory and methods stress however, it is asynchronicity that tends to be the rule as can be seen in the “phase displacement in the emergence of literary periods” (Brunkhorst 1981, 32) for instance. Equating shift with belatedness is restrictive in so far as it neglects to consider what John Neubauer (2003, 66) calls the contemporaneity of the heterotemporal, which defines the contingent timelines of linguistically and culturally linked literatures.

Whilst criticism may now be voiced with regard to Hoffmann’s method, it is important not to forget that it reflects the cross-border perspective and interliterary comparatist approach guiding literary historiographic activities in small multilingual and intercultural literary cultures, in particular those that share a literary language with a dominant centre with which they maintain a heteronomic relationship (*via* instances of legitimisation or consecration, see Sapiro 2011, 225-236) and from which they experience forms of internalised domination (Meylaerts 2004, 19). Hoffmann’s approach should be viewed as a product of a prevailing academic context where reference to foreign models was and remains important and where it takes time to develop individual methods.

4. Small and minor literatures: a new research paradigm

The emergence of the field of comparative research into small and minor literatures proves a pivotal moment for the study of Luxembourg literature. Work undertaken at the University of Luxembourg’s Institute of Luxembourg Language and Literature effectively demonstrates the innovative nature of the prospects offered by this field (see Glesener 2012; 2015). There is insufficient space in this article to go into detail about the major methodological strands of this new international research paradigm or to summarise its underlying lines of questioning as regards definition, typology, and added theoretical, epistemological, and conceptual value.

However, as the Belgian comparatist Reine Meylaerts (2004, 17) aptly puts it,

within the comparatist approach, we have for too long confined ourselves to an idealised juxtaposition of “major” “national”, “unilingual” and “European” literatures. Multilingual intercultural phenomena and their modes of deployment remain an undeveloped field.

Similarly, as argued by François Provenzano in his seminal work *Peripheral Histories. Stakes and Rhetoric of Literary History in Northern Francophonie. Belgium, French-speaking Switzerland/Quebec (Historiographies périphériques. Enjeux et rhétorique de l'histoire littéraire en francophonie du Nord. Belgique, Suisse romande, Québec, 2011)*, in literary phenomena habitually relegated to a marginal position, one observes a refusal of peripheralisation and a questioning of normativity traditionally taken as a model. Provenzano (*ibid.*, 11), much like Meylaerts, also stresses the need to account for the variety of contexts and poetics characterised by effects of marginalisation, hybridity and institutional precariousness.

With this focus on highlighting alternative situations of literary experience and development, the aim of this scholarship must not restrict itself to revealing singularity or specificity discourses alone. Rather, it is important to engage actively in theoretical discussions in order to pinpoint the fact that between centres and peripheries, between small/minor and major literatures there is a marked difference in the structure of historical evolution, in the development of aesthetic modes in multilingual and intercultural contexts, the set-up of the institutional apparatus and so forth. What is needed is a distancing from the historic and aesthetic normativity of the centres to underline the fact that small/minor literatures may have concerns, particularities and dynamics that are not those of the centres and that therefore cannot be apprehended by their normative models only.

Finally, returning to the case of Luxembourg literature, this research paradigm offers up new lines of questioning in terms of both methodology and orientation contexts. Indeed, whilst genetic contact requires orientation to the Franco-German model and the method of studying influences, and the geocultural context in turn calls for cultural affinities and linguistic kinship, it nevertheless appears that comparison with German and French literatures is to an extent tantamount to comparing the incomparable. The elements of the comparison are fundamentally different: in addition to the linguistic and cultural situation, they differ in terms of their age, the structure bestowed upon them by literary historiography, their autonomy, their literary field and quantity of other

empirical data. Adopting a more socioliterary approach, current research is attempting to compare Luxembourg literature with structurally and typologically similar situations (such as literatures in Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Lichtenstein, Malta or Slovenia, or the literatures of intercultural areas such as the Alpine Adriatic region) with which it does not necessarily have any direct contact. Adopting this new angle of approach, current studies are also seeking to contribute to research activities on the comparative history of small literatures in Europe.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN AUSTRIA: BETWEEN SOCIO-LITERARY APPROACHES AND LITERARY THEORY

SANDRA VLASTA

Introduction

In 2016, the 21st World Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) was hosted by the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna. Comparatists worldwide became aware of this department, which, though small with regard to staff, is the biggest one in Austria with regard to student numbers. This was not the first time the ICLA World Congress took place in Austria. In fact, in 1979 the 6th world congress had been organised in Innsbruck, at the second comparative literature department in the country (the Viennese department was still inexistent at the time, it was established only in 1980). The organisation of these two international comparative literature congresses underlines a major characteristic of the discipline in the Austrian context, namely its international orientation. Although there have been close contacts between the individual national departments, in particular between Innsbruck and Vienna, in their teaching as well as in their research, comparatists in Austria seem to look abroad rather than stay on a national level. This looking abroad is true for research, the reception of theory and topics as well as for student exchange, and is characterised by two main orientations: whereas at the Viennese department ties with institutions in France, Italy and Spain have always been strong, Innsbruck has always had an important emphasis on relations with colleagues in south-eastern European countries. Besides, the international outlook has always meant transgressing the borders of the German-speaking realm; even though in 1975 it was agreed that no Austrian Comparative Literature Association would be founded (and still today there is no such organisation) but that Austrian comparatists would join the German

association (the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, DGAVL), the ties between German and Austrian scholars of comparative literature until recently have been existent but somewhat loose.

Furthermore, the field of comparative literature in Austria is characterised by the main orientations of the two departments (and their respective scholars): whereas the Viennese department is characterised by its orientation towards socio-literary approaches and the Romance literatures, in Innsbruck colleagues traditionally have been more focussed on literary theory and the Slavic literatures.

This article describes and analyses the state, the self-conception and the (international) integration of comparative literature in Austria. It gives an overview of the development of the field, of the departments in Austria and their focus with regard to teaching and research, of the critical approach(es) applied and of the positioning of Austrian comparative literature scholars within the international field. This contribution is partly based on empirical research: I used the concept of the project *Comparer en Europe* by Frédérique Toudoire-Surlapierre and Nikol Dziub to compose a questionnaire which I sent to colleagues at Austrian universities where comparative literature is taught (*i.e.*, Graz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Salzburg and Vienna) in order to receive first-hand information about the current state of the discipline in the country.¹

1. Emergence of institutionalised comparative literature in Austria, overview of current situation

It has often been stated that comparative literature is a relatively young discipline. However, in Austria it is even younger, so to say. The first department was founded in 1970 in Innsbruck, in the western part of the country, at the capital of the region of Tyrol. Ten years later, another department was founded in 1980 in Vienna, at the biggest university of the country and, in fact, the biggest university in the German-speaking countries. For the first three years, it was a PhD programme only; at the

¹ I would like to thank the following colleagues for their valuable information on comparative literature departments and curricula at their institutions: Kathrin Ackermann-Pojtinger (Salzburg), Norbert Bachleitner (Vienna), Beate Eder-Jordan (Innsbruck), Reinhard Kacianka (Klagenfurt), Susanne Knaller (Graz). My special thanks go to Fridrun Rinner (Aix-Marseille) for generously sharing her knowledge about the development of comparative literature in Austria and to Norbert Bachleitner for his invaluable feedback.

time still combined B.A. and M.A. degree (called *Diplomstudiengang*) was introduced in 1983 on a trial basis and became a regular degree only in 1993. Both departments started as rather small institutions and they were strongly influenced by their respective first full professors—Zoran Konstantinović in Innsbruck and Alberto Martino in Vienna. Whereas Konstantinović, originally from Belgrade (then Yugoslavia), was a scholar of German studies and had before been a professor of German at the University of Belgrade, Alberto Martino had been a professor of German at the University of Pisa and Padua before being appointed at the University of Vienna. Though they have been retired for a long time, the current orientations of the two departments can still be traced back to those two figures, at least to a certain extent. Thus, Innsbruck has traditionally been oriented towards Eastern Europe (*i.e.*, towards the Slavic languages) and Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*; see Konstantinović and Rinner 2003), not least due to Konstantinović's former contacts. Furthermore, the department in Innsbruck has had a strong focus on theory. Vienna, on the other hand, has been oriented towards the Romance languages and focussed on social history studies of literature (*Sozialgeschichte der Literatur*) and socio-literary approaches. However, there have always been close contacts between the two institutions: for instance, Fridrun Rinner, who, together with Zoran Konstantinović and Klaus Zerinschek, founded the comparative literature department in Innsbruck in the 1970s, was a visiting professor in Vienna in 1985/86; and Beate Burtscher-Bechter from Innsbruck has also been teaching as a lecturer in Vienna for many years. Furthermore, colleagues have been serving as referees for Master theses and PhDs at both institutions. To date, both departments are independent, that is, they are not part of another philology (the latter is the case for many comparative literature departments in Germany, which are often allocated to a German Studies department). Besides, they are similar in size with regard to staff: two full professors each (Sebastian Donat and Martin Sexl in Innsbruck; Norbert Bachleitner and Achim Hölter in Vienna, as well as currently Christine Ivanovic who holds a fixed-term professorship) and two (Vienna) to four (Innsbruck) assistant professors (some of them only part-time and fixed-term).

Another important chair of comparative literature was founded in 1984 in the south of Austria, at the University of Klagenfurt, with Peter V. Zima as a full professor. Zima (1992; 2011) is internationally known for his introduction to comparative literature. In contrast to Innsbruck and Vienna, the department in Klagenfurt was a department of general and comparative literature (and not comparative literature only). However, it was dissolved

some years after Zima's retirement in 2012. The remaining colleagues taught (and one still teaches) at the newly founded Department of Cultural Analysis (*Kulturanalyse*), where comparative literature is no longer taught, however. Furthermore, in Klagenfurt there are no plans to reintroduce the discipline.

In Salzburg and Graz, the other two Austrian university towns, there are no departments of comparative literature, but various philologies have collaborated and founded either degree courses in comparative literature (M.A., Salzburg) or an area of research (*Forschungsbereich*) and organised modules on comparative literature that are obligatory for students in other degree courses (M.A. and PhD, Graz).

Thus, as only in Innsbruck and Vienna teaching and research is undertaken on a bigger scale, in what follows I will concentrate on these two departments when I speak of comparative literature in Austria. However, the existence of degree courses also at other universities shows that the discipline is very much alive in Austria and that both colleagues and students are interested in comparative literature.

2. Topics of comparative literature in Austria today

I have already mentioned the differing interests at the comparative literature departments in Innsbruck and in Vienna, *i.e.*, the orientation towards Eastern and Central Europe as well as theory in Innsbruck and the orientation towards the Romance literatures and the social history of literature in Vienna. Today, colleagues in both institutions undertake research on various themes and have a broad range with regard to the languages and literatures they cover, both in teaching and in research. However, the old roots are still visible. Accordingly, *comparer en Autriche* on the one hand (*i.e.*, in Vienna) means research (and teaching) with a focus on the context of literature, its production conditions, its reception, but also on actual (national and international) contacts between authors and other protagonists (such as translators, publishers, agents etc.) of the literary world. Comparative literature in Vienna thus overlaps with the field of book studies or book history, a discipline that is not institutionalised in Austria but has found a home at the Viennese department of comparative literature. Furthermore, the (not at all exclusive) focus on the context of literature defines it more clearly as distinct from other literature departments at the university, such as German, English or Romance (*Romanistik*) studies. There, the sections dedicated to literary studies focus strongly on aesthetic questions. In Innsbruck, on the other hand, *comparer en Autriche* stands for an intense

discussion of literary theory as well as research and teaching on, for example, intermediality, concepts of world literature, narratology or concepts of culture.

Current research projects in the two departments confirm the two different directions. In Vienna, Norbert Bachleitner is the coordinator of two third-party funded projects on censorship in Austria and the Habsburg monarchy: *Censorship in Austria 1751-1848: Database of Prohibited books* [*Zensur in Österreich 1751 bis 1848: Datenbank der Bücherverbote*] and *Censorship of Italian Literature in the Habsburg monarchy, 1750-1918* [*Zensur der italienischsprachigen Literatur in der Habsburgermonarchie, 1750-1918*]. Whereas the former has led to the creation of a large database of the books that were banned by the Austrian authorities between 1750 and 1848 (*Zensurdatenbank*) as well as a substantial monograph (Bachleitner 2017), the latter scrutinises how censorship in the Austro-Hungarian empire formed the literary field at the time, with a special focus on Lombardy-Venetia and on literature in Italian. The current research project of Achim Hölter underlines the tendency towards questions of the context of literature. The project is entitled *Ludwig Tieck's Library. Anatomy of a Romantic-Comparative Collection of Books* [*Ludwig Tiecks Bibliothek. Anatomie einer romantisch-komparatistischen Büchersammlung*] and its aim is to reconstruct the library of the important German romantic writer Ludwig Tieck in a digital database.² This will form the basis for further research on Tieck, on romanticism or on early comparative literary studies. Hölter comes from a different, more traditional literary studies school and both in teaching and in research focuses on canonical authors and texts or, rather, authors and texts that could be seen as typical for comparative literature, such as Marcel Proust, Jorge Luis Borges or Robert Musil. However, his current research interests are in line with the department's orientation towards the context of literature. In fact, some literary scholars might judge all three projects as being undertakings that belong more to history studies rather than to literary studies.³ In the Viennese tradition of comparative literature, however, scholars are keen to link the aspects of literatures' form and content to the wider realm of its social and political context. Accordingly, the research interests of the two permanent professors are complemented by topics such as translation studies and

² See <https://complit.univie.ac.at/forschungsprojekte/ludwig-tiecks-bibliothek-anatomie-einer-romantisch-komparatistischen-buechersammlung/>.

³ Furthermore, all three projects can be located in digital humanities, as one of their major outputs are databases.

reception theory, although it needs to be stated that the curriculum does of course include courses on literary theory and canonical texts and authors, too.

In Innsbruck, the research projects and individual colleagues' publications and research interests are focussed on theoretical aspects, although not restricted to particular theories. In fact, there is research and teaching on approaches such as Russian and French structuralism, Russian formalism, post-structuralism, intermediality, systems theory, cultural studies, inter-/transculturality etc. Thus, for instance, Sebastian Donat (2010) has published a monograph on descriptive metrics, Brigitte Rath (2011) does research on narratology and Ingo Schneider and Martin Sexl (2015) have edited a volume in which they scrutinise the dialectic character of culture, *i.e.*, for instance its ambiguity that enables the political right as well as the political left to exploit it for their needs. Apart from this strong focus on questions of theory, also the focus on Eastern (and Southern) Europe is still strong at Innsbruck's comparative literature department. Recent publications include Dunja Brötz' book (2008) on the reception of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* in films by Akira Kurosawa, Saša Gedeon and Wim Wenders, and Martin Sexl's study (2008) on the literary and the media reception of the Balkan wars.

In both departments, there is also a big interest in minor art and artists as well as in contemporary art. This is perhaps more obvious in the case of the department in Innsbruck. In fact, there is a strong interest in intermedial and cultural studies approaches there, and these approaches are used to deal with current topics, such as film and media, as well as with conceptual discussions of issues, such as "culture". This focus has been important in Innsbruck since the organisation of the ICLA congress in 1979, where for the first time the field of comparative literature was opened up to include also other forms of art, apart from literature. In fact, one volume of the proceedings was dedicated to (and entitled) *Literature and the Other Arts* (Konstantinović, Scher and Weisstein 1981). Today, publications as well as recent research projects, such as *A Comparison of Web 2.0. and Discourses on Pop by Way of System Theory* [SYSTEMTHEORETISCHER VERGLEICH VON Web 2.0 UND DISKURSEN ÜBER POP] and *Stock-Taking. A Scenic Essay* [INVENTUR. Ein szenischer Essay], both conducted at the department in Innsbruck, illustrate the interest in recent cultural phenomena, such as the internet and pop culture, and intermedial approaches (for the latter, see for instance Brötz, Eder-Jordan and Fritz 2013): in fact, *Inventur* is a project combining music, theatre and modern dance. Furthermore, with regard to minor art, Beate Eder-Jordan, a senior lecturer in Innsbruck, researches

and teaches on literature by Roma, Sinti, travellers and other minorities (Hussl, Thurner and Eder-Jordan 2015).

In Vienna, on the other hand, one of Norbert Bachleitner's research interests is digital literature, cyber literature and the hypertext, thus very contemporary forms of literary art. Achim Hölter, on the other hand, in his teaching for instance discusses recent concepts of world literature and thus the application of the concept to contemporary literature. During the past years, Christine Ivanovic has further extended the department's research interests, in particular with regard to Digital Humanities, exophonic writing and translational literature, and thus minor art and artists as well as contemporary forms of expression and research.

Furthermore, in both departments, research on minor and contemporary art has been supported by the professors: for instance, literature by immigrants (migrant writing, *Migrationsliteratur*) was first studied in Austria at Vienna's comparative literature department (and not, for instance, at the German Studies department; see Vlasta 2008). The question of contemporary exile and diaspora, too, has been furthered in Vienna's department, as is evidenced by a PhD thesis on literature by Iranian authors in exile (Frühwirth 2014). Likewise, Norbert Bachleitner's research focus on censorship pays attention to this phenomenon in various contexts (and thus attention to suppressed literature), as expressed in a recent PhD thesis on censorship in Turkey (Pinar 2013). The Balkan wars have been of interest both in Innsbruck and in Vienna, as illustrated by Martin Sexl's volume quoted above and by Elena Messner's PhD thesis (2012) on the reception of post-Yugoslav prose of war in the German-speaking countries.

3. Comparison as a critical approach in the Austrian context

In their understanding of the adjective "comparative" in "comparative literature", the departments in Innsbruck and Vienna (for instance in the descriptions on their websites) underline the transnational aspect of the discipline, *i.e.*, the fact that it crosses bordersnational and linguistic borders, but also medial borders. They stress that there is no discipline that examines literature from such a broad and multi-faceted perspective and that focuses on relations between literary works and their authors rather than dealing with literature in one language only. Thus, the stress is less on the comparison than on correlating issues with each other or analysing relations and the question of transfer. This refers to all kinds of realms: relations and transfers between texts, between authors, between (national)

literatures, between different media, between languages (translation), between traditions and schools, etc. It is stressed in both institutions that

the research into the relationships and transfers between literatures, or between literature and other arts, is based on reflexive theories (e.g. reception theory, intertextuality, postcolonial studies) and the analysis of the role of institutions involved in transmitting the works (e.g. the publishing industry, traditional and new media).⁴

This quote from the website of the Viennese department stresses that the analysis of the role of institutions involved in transmitting literature is an important focus and that at the institution there is an interest in everything that happens in the literary field. In Martin Sexl's (Innsbruck) *Small Handbook for B.A. Students of Comparative Literature (Kleines Handbuch für Bachelorstudierende der Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft*; 2017, 3), comparative literature is defined by three main characteristics: (1) the fact that the discipline is not restricted to literature in a particular language but that it works across languages and cultures; (2) the focus on intermediality and the interest in relations between literature and other art forms (such as painting, music, film, theatre, dance etc.) but also other cultural phenomena (such as politics, philosophy, economics, law, etc.); (3) the intense occupation with literary theory and the scrutiny of one's own methods and concepts. The field of research (*Forschungsbereich*) in Graz has a pronounced focus on literary theory and on intermediality; as in Innsbruck, there is a marked interest in theoretical questions with an interdisciplinary orientation, for instance on literature and law, literature and dance, literature and emotions.

Furthermore, it should be added that in all institutions teaching comparative literature in Austria, students (and staff) are supposed to work or at least read in more than one, usually in more than two languages; thus the translingual aspect is a strong focus everywhere. Both in Innsbruck and in Vienna, students furthermore have to proof their basic knowledge of Latin in the course of their undergraduate studies⁵. In Vienna, they additionally have to take courses for literary scholars in two modern foreign languages as part of the regular curriculum, and in Innsbruck, too, students are obliged to attend language courses and/or courses in literary studies, for instance in the department of English, Italian, French or

⁴ See <https://complit.univie.ac.at/en/home/>

⁵ In Vienna, prior to the Bologna reform, students had to proof basic knowledge in at least two foreign languages in order to be admitted to the comparative literature course of studies.

Russian studies. Also in Salzburg and Graz the importance of language competence is stressed; for instance, Kathrin Ackermann-Pojtinger, who is responsible for the course of studies in Salzburg, explains the understanding of comparison in her institution particularly with regard to the reading of texts in their original language.

Thus “comparison” or “comparative”, in the end, is defined broadly in the Austrian context and, at least partly, with reference to a traditional understanding of the discipline (reading in original languages, relations between national literatures). This broad definition allows for a great range of topics and approaches in teaching and in research. At the same time, this openness also allows for newer critical approaches, such as the already cited postcolonial studies, cultural studies or projects in digital humanities that have been received and applied by scholars of comparative literature in Austria.

4. The field of research: international positioning, networks, collaborations, spaces and modes of expression

Both Vienna and Innsbruck, but also the colleagues involved in comparative literature curricula in Graz and Salzburg, have always had strong international relations. Historically, when it comes to Vienna and Innsbruck, these were more intense in the respective realms of research, *i.e.*, in the East and in the West, respectively. However, one needs to put this into perspective, as Innsbruck, in particular Zoran Konstantinović during the late 1970s and the 1980s, has succeeded in bringing together the East and the West at a time that was politically characterised by the Cold War. For instance, at the ICLA congress in Innsbruck in 1979, Konstantinović invited Hans Robert Jauss, one of the founding fathers of the theory and aesthetics of reception and then professor in Constance, and Manfred Naumann, who interpreted literature as part of social communication and was then at the GDR’s Central Institute for Literary History in East Berlin. Moreover, Konstantinović was in contact with scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Juri Lotman. In this manner, Konstantinović strove for an increase of the dialogue between East and West on a scholarly basis, focusing on the common academic interests. More recently, the Viennese department has further strengthened its international contacts by inviting renowned scholars of comparative literature as guest professors. In this manner, Christine Ivanovic (Tokio; she currently holds a Berta-Karlik-professorship at the Viennese department), Rüdiger Görner (London), Theo D’haen (Leuven) and Manfred Pfister (Berlin) have taught at the department. On the other hand,

a number scholars of comparative literature who received their training in Austria have had successful academic careers abroad: for instance, Fridrun Rinner (from the department in Innsbruck) became a professor of Comparative Literature at Aix-Marseille Université; Karl Zieger (also from the department in Innsbruck) became a professor, too, first in Valenciennes and, then, in Lille, and, for a number of years, was the president of the French Society of General and Comparative Literature [*Société Française de Littérature Générale et Comparée*]; and Johannes Frimmel (also from Vienna) became an assistant professor in Munich.

Another indicator for the discipline's internationality is the Erasmus programme. Today, Innsbruck has Erasmus contracts with three universities: Aix-Marseille Université, Ruhr-Universität Bochum and Mary Immaculate College Limerick. Furthermore, it cooperates with the Department of Comparative Literature in Munich, both in teaching and in research (Munich is the closest department of comparative literature in terms of geographical distance). The Viennese department has Erasmus contracts still mainly with universities in Romance countries, *i.e.*, in France (and in the French-speaking part of Switzerland), Italy, and Spain, but also with institutions in other countries. Today, the presence of Austrian colleagues in the German Association of General and Comparative Literature (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, DGAVL*) is strong: for instance, Achim Hölter was the president of the *DGAVL* when he accepted the post of full professor in Vienna in 2009. He continued to be the president for a couple of years—therefore, also the association's yearbook was edited in Vienna from 2005 to 2011. In spring 2017, a new steering committee of the *DGAVL* was elected, and again an Austrian colleague is part of it: Martin Sexl (Innsbruck) is the new vice-chairman. Also in the European Society of Comparative Literature / *Société Européenne de Littérature Comparée* (*ESCL/SELCE*), Austrian scholars have been active, not only as participants at the biannual congresses but also as part of the executive committee (myself from 2011 to 2015 and, since 2015, Gianna Zocco).

Apart from these networks, the membership in the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) is important, and the organisation of the ICLA's 21st World Congress in 2016 in Vienna was a strong sign of this. With this huge event, Vienna's comparative literature department has strengthened its position on an international level and underlined its international orientation. The proceedings, just like the ones of the ICLA congress in Innsbruck in 1979, will be a lasting sign of this. Furthermore, both departments have international research collaborations with other institutions, Innsbruck with the Seoul National University in

South Korea and Vienna with the Institute of World Literature at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava.

Besides this international academic orientation, Austrian comparative literature departments are oriented towards the national literary field, too. In fact, it is striking, that in many of the institutions in Austria there are strong relations to the literary world and the world of art. For instance, in Salzburg the degree course of comparative literature is involved in a cooperation between the Paris Lodron University (where the degree course is located) and the Mozarteum University Salzburg (a university specializing in music, theatre and the visual arts). This cooperation is intended to organise regular events where both scholars and artists are involved. The department in Innsbruck, on the other hand, collaborates with cultural institutions such as the International Film Festival Innsbruck, the *Literaturhaus am Inn* (house of literature), the *Initiative Minderheiten* (an initiative that serves as a platform for the minorities living in Austria) and the *Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen* (a postgraduate center for the production and mediation of, and the research on, visual arts and art theory). With these institutions, the department in Innsbruck organises events for the public, but also seminars for the students. Furthermore, students collaborate with these institutions as part of their course work or they are offered internships that complement their studies. The Viennese department cooperates with the *Sigmund Freud Museum*, where, for instance, a lecture series as part of the curriculum was organised.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that many of the students both at the Viennese department and at the one in Innsbruck are (or have become) writers themselves (a lot of them quite successful), others work for publishers, for newspapers or as literary critics. Thus, many of the students succeed in applying the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies in their professional lives. What is more, in both departments, writers are also invited to teach as lecturers; for instance, Peter Waterhouse and Thomas Ballhausen have been giving seminars in Vienna, and Raoul Schrott has been teaching in Innsbruck (where he habilitated in comparative literature). Other lecturers work for publishing houses or in the cultural sector.

When it comes to academic spaces and modes of expressions, a number of internationally recognised book series are edited by colleagues at Austrian institutions, such as International Research on General and comparative literature (*Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft*; IFAVL; Brill/Rodopi; despite the German title of the series, all volumes are published in English), International Archive of Social History of German Literature

(*Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur; IASL*; Max Niemeyer Verlag), Studies and Texts of Social History Studies of Literature (*Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur; STSL*; de Gruyter) and Literary Studies on Antiquity and Modernism (*Comparanda—Literaturwissenschaftliche Studien zu Antike und Moderne*; Studienverlag). Besides, the renowned comparative literature journal *Arcadia* (de Gruyter) is currently being co-edited by an Austrian scholar, Vladimir Biti. Biti, though affiliated to the Department of Slavonic studies at the University of Vienna, is a scholar who has been working comparatively.

Furthermore, with one of the latest introductions to comparative literature (Grabovszki 2011), published by the well-known German publisher UTB, Austrian scholar of comparative literature Ernst Grabovszki has contributed to the field on an international level.

Conclusion

Considering that Austria is a rather small country with about 8,7 million inhabitants and six full universities, the position of comparative literature as a discipline is rather strong. There are two proper comparative literature departments in Austria (Innsbruck and Vienna), there are degree courses in Salzburg and an area of research with taught courses in Graz. Furthermore, there are a number of colleagues at various institutions who undertake research in and teach comparative literature. The two independent departments are relatively big with regard to student numbers and staff—bearing in mind that we speak of a small country and a humanities discipline. The first meeting of comparative literature scholars in Austria in Vienna in April 2018 has further strengthened the discipline in the country.

The definition of “comparison” is broad, but with different *foci* that, in the case of Vienna and Innsbruck, can be traced back to the founders of the departments. Nevertheless, with regard to teaching and research, all institutions offer a very wide range of topics, interests and approaches which also becomes obvious in the international orientation of comparative literature in Austria.

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CHAPTER NINE

SWITZERLAND, THE IDEAL REPUBLIC OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE?

THOMAS HUNKELER

A few years ago, I was asked by the French journal of comparative literature, the *Revue de littérature comparée*, to provide a synthesis about the state of comparative literature in Switzerland. Of course, I immediately refused this offer, since I was convinced that in spite of the fact that I had just been appointed president of the Swiss Society of Comparative Literature, there was in fact no such discipline in my country. It was only after long and friendly encouragements from my French colleagues, who were somehow at pains to understand my refusal, that I eventually changed my mind and agreed to write a piece, which I then placed under the heading of Ben Vautier's famous slogan "Switzerland doesn't exist"—a slogan which was written prominently across the Swiss pavilion at the World Fair of Sevilla in 1992 (Hunkeler 2014). I knew that it would be difficult to explain to my foreign readers why multilingual and multicultural Switzerland, which in their eyes seemed to be predestined to be some ideal republic of comparative literature, did in fact not have a strong field of comparative literature. And even worse, that no one in the country seemed to bother much about this situation.

Let me briefly come back to my article for the *Revue de littérature comparée* and to the reasons which I then gave to explain this rather strange situation. First of all, it is important to understand that in federalist Switzerland, education—even on the level of the university—is not a matter of national interest, but of the smaller "states", that is of the cantons, which constitute the country. All the universities of Switzerland are ruled by the cantons; their budget is first and foremost depending on the cantons in which they are situated, much less on national funding. If Switzerland is indeed multilingual and multicultural, the same is true to a much lesser degree for the cantons, of which only a few (such as Valais, Grisons, Fribourg and Bern) are officially multilingual. University collaboration of course exists on a national level, but most often this only

concerns individual researchers, not university policy or strategic decisions.

The second point which makes it difficult to speak about Swiss comparative literature in terms of a structured discipline or of an academic subfield is rooted in the specific cultural context of the different linguistic regions of the country. Both the German and the French speaking parts of Switzerland (the situation is a little more complicated for the Italian speaking part) tend to be strongly influenced by the traditions of their neighboring countries, on the one hand, and by the more recent evolutions of Anglo-Saxon research, on the other. This holds specifically true for the discipline of comparative literature, which seems to be shattered not only into a French, a German and several Anglo-Saxon versions, but also in at least as many languages in which to practice comparative literature. It might thus well be said that comparative literature in Switzerland is somehow “omniabsent”: it is everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

If one looks at the institutional representation of comparative literature at Swiss universities, it immediately appears that the discipline is extremely weak in terms of its academic presence. Only two professorships entirely dedicated to comparative literature exist in the country: one in Lausanne, one in Zurich. The situation of the other Swiss universities is worse, since they have to make things work on a part-time basis, mostly with a teaching staff only partially dedicated to comparative literature. Their program in comparative literature, if it exists at all, is in fact being taught by professors of the so-called “national philologies” who accept to open up their teaching to comparative aspects and/or methods while, at the same time, teaching mostly in their own field. The critical financial situation of the humanities in most of the Swiss universities has intensified this use of “double labelling” of professorships in literature: many colleagues nowadays teach French, or German, or English, *and* comparative literature, at least for the sake of the program, or for the websites of the institutes, which then seem a lot larger than they are in reality.

Of course, one might argue that there is something beneficial in the fact that more and more professors of the “national” literatures open up to comparative literature in just the same way that they have opened up to intercultural dialogue and literary theory. There certainly are advantages in the fact of putting together the strengths of colleagues of different fields in order to compose a multifaceted program of comparative literature: a large and multilingual offer which comes from multiple backgrounds; an interdisciplinary approach to literature; enhanced collaboration between colleagues and departments; effects of synergy in terms of means, etc. But

one needs also to address the disadvantages of this kind of usage: the absence of a specific profile and of methods specific to comparative literature; a lack of coherence in the study programs, which are being composed *ad hoc* on the basis not of what is important to the students, but of what one has at hand; the logic of juxtaposition in these programs, in which the different components do not always respond to each other; a superficial collaboration, etc. There is indeed a risk of a centrifugal effect on the discipline of comparative literature, since by trying to be everywhere, one might well end up by being nowhere.

But the most dangerous obstacle to comparative literature is, paradoxically, Switzerland's multilingualism, which is in fact being lived much more often in the form of a juxtaposition of different monolingualisms, rather than as a real multilingualism. Let me illustrate this fact by a look at the bilingual university where I teach in Fribourg, which is situated right on the language border between the German and the French speaking parts of the country. In Fribourg, the label of bilingualism is in fact used for several situations which we might want to distinguish: the possibility to follow a study program in either German or French (in this case, the offer is bilingual, but not the programs); the possibility to study this same program in *both* German and French (students then follow classes in both languages to a degree they choose); or the obligation (mostly in small disciplines) to study their program in both languages, the choice depending then on the language competence of the professors. And of course, the fact that more and more programs, mostly in science, are being taught in English complicates this situation even further.

For comparative literature as it is being taught in Switzerland, the question then is how to cope with a multilingualism that concerns not only the object of study, as anywhere else, but also the language(s) used in class. If you take into account the different scientific traditions mentioned above, this brings forth a situation in which there are several ways to practice comparative literature: in French, according to the French tradition; in German, according to the German tradition; in English, according to the different Anglo-Saxon traditions which have had an impact in Europe in the last twenty years (cultural studies, literary theory, postcolonial and world literature, etc.). And of course, it is possible, even if not that frequent, to mix national languages and traditions. The result, at any rate, is a most complicated and fragmented landscape, in which the centrifugal forces are much stronger than the centripetal ones.

In an ideal world (in short, Switzerland as seen from abroad), such a situation would not be much of a problem, since a scholar in comparative literature would simply have the choice to speak either language,

depending on the context, and probably also Italian, Spanish, Russian, and several other languages. The ideal scholar in comparative literature is of course multilingual, as we know. But we also know that reality is less glorious, and that we all have our limits. There are not that many people who speak and/or read more than ten languages; and there are even less who do possess a literary culture in those languages. In Switzerland, where foreign literature is usually taught, on a university level, in its original language, and where reading in translation is being thought of mostly as a sin, practicing comparative literature thus becomes complicated. One is confronted with the choice of either (a) restricting comparative literature to a small elite which has cultivated its multilingualism; (b) practicing comparative literature mostly in one language by using translations for other languages (a choice which is being considered as almost contradictory); (c) adapting comparative literature to *ad hoc* constellations which depend mostly on the biographies of the researchers involved—as if the fact of speaking and reading in several languages transformed you almost automatically into a scholar in the field of comparative literature. As a matter of fact, it is quite often for biographical reasons that people choose comparative literature as a field; but this does restrict the discipline to the comparison of two (or more) literatures which most often have not been chosen for scientific reasons, but as a result of individual biographies.

In order to get out of this dead end and give a solid methodological foundation to the discipline, comparative literature in Switzerland has turned, as in other countries, towards literary theory, thus transforming itself into “comparative and general literature” in most of the universities, or into “cultural studies” in other places. But the age of theory is now fading, and with it the possibility of creating a common ground for Swiss comparative literature.

If one takes into account the problems mentioned above, it might be more fruitful to opt for a different perspective on Swiss comparative literature. Let us thus ask, not if comparative literature is at all possible in Switzerland, but in contrast, if it is possible *not* to be a comparatist in this country. To this end, I would like to sketch out the portrait of a “non-comparatist”, knowing full well that such a thing might well not exist as such, and at the risk of producing a simple caricature instead of a scientific profile. I would also like to point out that by drawing this image, I might well end up producing some sort of self portrait in disguise, since from a purely institutional point of view, I am a professor of French literature who, like so many, has ended up also teaching and practicing comparative literature without ever having studied it. That being said, I would like to

add that I do not consider myself a comparatist against my own will, but rather a person who is convinced, today more than ever, that comparative literature is—or should be—unavoidable in the context of today’s academic field, but also in consideration of today’s literary production.

How are we then to imagine our “non-comparatist”? First of all, there is indeed the language issue. The “non-comparatist” is of course *monolingual* in the sense that he or she takes as granted a situation in which one language is clearly privileged over all the others, but without him or her ever reflecting on this situation. This means that our “non-comparatist” not only reads and writes in only one language, which happens to be his own, but that this language constitutes a cultural background which is being taken for granted. In this sense, his or her language is not *one* language among many others, but *the* language to which all the others are being subjected, be it consciously or not. Such a situation corresponds to what Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (1998, 109) call “the universalization of particularisms”, by the same token reminding us that “nothing is more universal than the pretention to universality”. I would thus argue that there is indeed a great difference between our “non-comparatist” whose world vision is monocultural because it is monolingual, and all those who have had the opportunity to experience, in whatever way, that languages and cultures can only be translated to a certain extent: they have made the experience that they are indeed, to some extent, irreducible. One may think here of Barbara Cassin’s dictionary of “untranslatables” (2014) which, precisely because they cannot be translated properly, have to be constantly retranslated, such as Hegel’s famous “Aufhebung”. One might also quote Samuel Beckett, who in his first published essay on Joyce in 1929 criticized the English term “doubt” for not giving the word any “sensuous suggestion of hesitancy”, as does the German word “Zweifel” (in which the word “zwei” (two) resonates), or to a lesser degree the Italian word “dubitare” (in which seems to resonate “doppio”). As Beckett adds: “Mr Joyce recognizes how inadequate ‘doubt’ is to express a state of extreme uncertainty, and replaces it by ‘in twosome twiminds’.” (Beckett 1984, 28)

Our “non-comparatist” is thus not only monolingual, but *monocultural* in the sense that the categories of his thinking follow what the French philosopher Jacques Rancière (2004) calls a “distribution of the sensible” (“partage du sensible”); that is, a system of forms which determines *a priori* what is being submitted to sensual experience, which is thus not being questioned but presupposed as given. In the same sense, his experience of temporality and his “regime of historicity” (as developed by Hartog 2016) are not being questioned by other ways of thinking about

temporality and historicity. A good example of this kind of blindness is the one we are confronted with in national literary history, a discipline which is still being taught regularly at universities throughout the world. Its inclusions and exclusions, its boundaries and structuring, but also its terminology are, at least in the eyes of our “non-comparatist”, a given matrix from which he or she observes literature and to which he or she unavoidably leads it back. As an example, one might think here of the European avant-garde movements which do not recover the same realities in all European countries. What seems to belong to modernism in one country is considered to belong to the avant-garde in the other. Definitions are never innocent: they pretend to simply describe an object, but in reality, they start by constructing it and end up by appropriating it.

The third aspect I would like to point out is the fact that our “non-comparatist” very strongly tends to think of himself or herself as a *specialist*, that is as a disciplined member of a scientific discipline. This kind of attitude offers of course a certain guarantee of scientific respectability, but at the same time, it contributes to discrediting efforts to go and even to think beyond the boundaries of a discipline. From this kind of perspective, interdisciplinarity, which is at the very core of comparative literature, is considered both dangerous—because of its tendency not to respect boundaries—and frivolous, since it can be easily subjected to criticism for its “amateurism” or its “impressionism” by the “real” specialists of all the disciplines involved. The less aggressive form of this kind of blame consists in the gentle reminder that it is nowadays difficult enough to master one discipline, and also (but this second aspect is seldom openly addressed) to position oneself in more than one academic field or sector. The injunction “not to compare what is incomparable” belongs to the same kind of *disciplination* by the scientific disciplines.

This being said, our portrait of the “non-comparatist” is, of course, the result of utter schematization and exaggeration. Please note that all aspects portrayed in what proceeds are fictitious, and that no identification with actual researchers (living or deceased) is intended nor should be inferred. As a matter of fact, few of our colleagues would want to recognize themselves in the portrait I have just sketched out. On the contrary, they would probably all insist on the fact that they are also competent in other languages than their own, that they utterly refuse to restrict themselves to a monocultural logic, and that if they accept to be considered as specialists, this does not mean that they do not follow their true interest for interdisciplinary approaches. The answer to our initial question thus seems to be clear: no, it is not possible not to be a comparatist, since all the “non-

comparatist” colleagues seem to be open to comparative approaches—at least more or less.

On the basis of what has just been pointed out, it is not easy to give a clear idea of today’s comparative literature in Switzerland, since the situation is quite ambivalent and sometimes almost contradictory. On the one hand, one can almost see everywhere the tendency to go beyond the boundaries of the so-called national literatures, be it in direction of other literatures, other art forms and other cultural practices, or towards questions of literary theory or issues more specific to comparative literature. On the other hand, these contributions are being made, for the most part, outside of institutes of comparative literature, maybe because the multilingual (or multi-monolingual) context which prevails in Switzerland tends to favor a juxtaposition of analyses belonging to one given (academic) culture, rather than a common reflection on cultural interaction. According to an old joke, the Swiss work well together because they do not understand each other. Maybe this also points to an inconvenient truth about comparative literature as it is being practiced in Switzerland more and more often.

But let me end on a more positive note. For doctoral students, collaboration on the national level has significantly increased in recent years, and people tend to become more and more conscious of the necessity—and the opportunity—to create a multilingual reality for practicing comparative literature in Switzerland. This also means that we should no longer simply rely on the traditions of our neighboring countries. There is nothing bad about every university and every region of the country having its own methods, its own debates, and its own traditions. But these idiosyncrasies should not be practiced at the expense of a regular exchange both on a national and on an international level. Comparative literature is the place in which we learn, through comparison, to intellectually profit not only from the differences between languages, literatures and cultures, but also—and maybe most of all—from all the obstacles that arise when we compare different literatures. Comparative literature might well be the school in which we learn to deal with these obstacles. It would be a pity to see such an endeavor fail at a time when our discipline is being confronted, more than ever, by the challenge of its globalization.

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PART III
Proximity and Distance:
Comparative Literature
and Translation

CHAPTER TEN

**NATIONAL LITERATURE GONE
COMPARATIVE—MOBILITY CHALLENGES
IN ROMANIAN STUDIES**

MIHAELA URSA

Just a couple of decades ago, comparative literature was not expected to do much more than “to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures—especially the local literature” (Moretti 2000, 68). Recent trends in population mobility, cultural intermingling, globalization, migration, have rendered this traditional task—if not obsolete—at least barely sufficient for the explanation of relationships in the literary field. This essay aims to present a mobility turn in Romanian literary studies, which altered the traditional relationships between comparative literature and national literature while at the same time urging comparatists themselves to rethink their tools, their methodological approaches and their work object. A secondary scope of this text is to open a list of present-day challenges to be faced by European comparative studies in general, and by their Romanian practices in particular. It will sum up a list of absences and gaps to be filled, but—hauntingly ghostly as it may turn—it will be nonetheless relevant to the reshaping of comparative literature on present day grounds.

1. Stand still, I’m comparing!

As for most European countries during the nineteenth century, building the Romanian nation did not only mean assigning some geographical boundaries to a body of people united by language and history, but also founding a national corpus of literature. In the national paradigm, comparative literature did two things: it opened up the literary field to the international, cosmopolitan view, showing one’s nation as part of an

alleged “Republic of Letters”¹, and, on the other hand, it pointed to those particularities which stood—in every act of comparison—for “national specificity”. Comparative literature was the counterpart national literatures needed in order to connect these specificities, but the service was mutual, because comparability was—until recently—unimaginable in the absence of national literatures. The “comparable” relied on a settled idea of national culture, and comparability depended on the clear-cut differences between literary cultures defined by nation boundaries. Translations took part in this national branding according to specificity, whether they were viewed as alien creations meant to internationalize and erase the national print or as indispensable elements taking part in its very creation.

For the last decades however, a clear transnational trend has altered the cultural priorities of the East-European countries, and Romania makes no exception. This trend has arrested the development of nation-related humanity studies, claiming the instability of cultures and making previously established terms, concepts and methods problematical again. Things get even more complicated by the fact that, after the demise of the utopia of a situatedness of nations and cultures, the counterpoised utopia of a global, peaceful world is not more tenable either. On the contrary, global tensions of de-nationalization and de-territorialization have brought about, in reaction, similar but opposite tensions of re-nationalization and re-territorialization, even cultural tribalism, properly conceived as “negative globality”.² Instead of a promised transnational culture, relaxedly mobile and poly-communicational,

we can only hope that cultural tensions might be contained through a growing awareness that the binding nature of constitutions and international agreements creates scope for political action (Meyer-Kalkus 2010, 117).

However, from a comparatist point of view, this situation should not be cause for concern, because comparative literature—born in the convoluted

¹ The intrinsic Paris-centrism of Pascale Casanova’s approach has already been criticized by numerous voices, such as Theo D’haen, Marko Juvan, Djelal Kadir, Christian Moraru and others.

² In his own proposal for the future of comparative literature as “negotiated comparative literature”, Djelal Kadir (2006, 131) believes that “such strategies as ‘distant reading’ (Moretti 2000), ‘planetarity’ (Spivak 2003), ‘world literature’ (Damrosch 2003) that have already emerged in the new century are clearly symptomatic of what Alberto Moreiras has called ‘negative globality’”.

times of the modern revolutions and the making of nations—always found beneficial grounds in times of crisis and historically thrived on them.

In my opinion, the main result of the latest geopolitical and cultural developments is a newly found need to recuperate a poetics of translation on a cultural level. Transforming translation into a viable cultural negotiation tool could prove to be the angle comparative literature needs to reassess and reaffirm the efficacy of its means and the viability of its practices. It is true that the high rates of cultural mobility have pushed comparability out of its comfort zone, when comparatists found themselves bound to work fluid terms and fuzzy identities into provisional relationships, but this new discomfort of comparison is the ideal context for cultural translation.

This essay focuses on the redefinitions that have happened in the last two decades, especially under the pressure of the new migrant era, in regard to the Romanian case. The act of translating today has long since surpassed its restrictive linguistic understanding. It has become an ontological posit, a constitutive morphological stance for the new type of migrant, multinational self that replaces more and more the utopia of a national identity. For the new generations of educated Romanians, who spend much of their university years in European mobilities, *living in translation* is more familiar than living “at home”. Even the idea of “home” has lost some of the magic aura it enjoyed in their parents’ episteme. For the millions of Romanians who work in Europe or in the rest of the world, while not giving up home-related nostalgias, *translated life* is a new form of existence. And if we take into account the fact that Romania today still has the world highest migration rate in times of peace, then we understand why this “translationness” might be one of the keys to the future of comparative literature.

Just as it has contributed to the development of national identity for the most part of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, translation offers now a promise of a third, mobile place, which is an *identity in translation*, always precarious and changeable. When Rebecca Walkowitz (2015) identifies the new “born translated” in multinational and multicultural environments, deemed “imagined communities” by Benedict Anderson (1983), she actually includes all cultures whose translational activity becomes constitutive not only for “what we should read” and “how we should write” but also for “who we should be”. As a result, comparative studies in Romania, and comparative literature in particular, are urged to focus on the renegotiations of cultural heterogeneity and cultural border-crossing and inter-crossing, as well as on shared and translated spaces. In the mobile paradigm of culture that now defines Europe, comparative

literature has to adapt to doing much more than just unsettling national enclosures, as it did in the previous paradigm. The new nomadism has put the intrinsic mobility of comparatism to the ultimate test.

2. A Romanian state of the art

Before giving a theoretical perspective on the most important challenges of contemporary comparatism today, a short account of the state of the discipline in Romania today is necessary (see Ursa 2013, 51-69). Two modes of conceiving, theorizing and practising comparative literature are still in place in Romanian academia today. The first one protects a more traditional, French-oriented view of the relationships to be comparatively assessed and analysed among the literatures of the world. This traditional mode consists of two main trends. The strongest one can be described as *aesthetic comparatism*, and it is heavily based on thematology, analogy, and the close reading of canonic works (the so called “great books”). An important promoter of this trend in academia was Tudor Vianu, who held the first chair of comparative and universal literature in 1948 at the University of Bucharest, while a similar chair was founded at the University of Cluj (Dimitrie Popovici, Liviu Rusu). Even before that date, Romanian intellectuals worked on proto-forms of comparatist research in nineteenth century folklore studies (Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, Lazăr Șăineanu), aesthetics (Titu Maiorescu), and literary sociology (Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea), and at the beginning of the twentieth century a few volumes of comparative literature were published abroad by Romanian scholars (Rusu 1935/1972).

The birth of a proper academic discipline of comparative literature happened in the fifties and it was—paradoxically enough—the uncanny consequence of an ideological act of censorship. The Romanian communist regime banned Aesthetics from the University, on account of it being a form of imperialist reasoning, and replaced some Aesthetics chairs with “Universal Literature” (an almost exact synonym of “Comparative Literature” at the time). This is why Tudor Vianu’s school of comparatism incorporated principles and methodologies from German aesthetics into the main core of their comparatism, which explains why Vianu and his followers³ developed a comparative literature that looked like cultural

³ Among the most notable followers of Vianu’s mode of comparative literature today, one can include Mircea Martin, Liviu Papadima, Ștefan Borbely, Angelo Mitchievici, Adriana Babeți, Mircea Mihăieș, and others.

philosophy: “comparative literature was called to define the specific of literary creation and to assess interferences between writers, national and universal trends and their mutual influences” (Popa 1971).

The counterpart of this *aesthetic comparatism* in the same old-school mode of comparative literature of French influence has been *historical comparatism*, focusing on trends, genres, regional developments and represented among others by Paul Cornea, Romul Munteanu, and Dimitrie Popovici. These comparatists come from history-related fields, mostly either from literary history, or literary sociology and they are also the first to think about the institutional framings of the discipline. First conferences of comparative literature were held in 1967 and 1969, organized by the Institute of History and Literary Theory “G. Călinescu” in Bucharest. Participation was international and volumes were published subsequently by the Romanian Academy (see Dima and Papadima 1972, 291-292), while at about the same time Romanian comparatists were involved in some international research projects. In 1997, under the leadership of Paul Cornea, from the University of Bucharest, the Romanian Association of General and Comparative Literature (RAGCL) was founded and a first conference was held in Timisoara the same year. In fact, a former Romanian National Committee of Comparative Literature (RNCCL) had been in existence since 1970, but RAGCL claimed autonomy from the Committee, which dissolved in 1989.

There were only two synthetic volumes on Romanian comparatism until 1990, both indebted to historical comparatism and—in variable degrees—to the official communist ideology: *The History and Theory of Comparative Literature in Romania (Istoria și teoria comparatismului în România)*, coordinated by Alexandru Dima and Ovidiu Papadima in 1972, and *Romanian Comparatism (Le Comparatisme roumain)*, coordinated by Romul Munteanu in 1982. After 1990, a chapter by Paul Cornea, “La Littérature comparée en Roumanie”, appeared in an international volume (1997, 99-137). Other synthetic studies by myself (2011, 11-19), Andrei Terian (2013, 3-6), and Vasile Voia (2016) appeared, thus confirming the increasing interest among comparatist researchers in both a historical synthesis of the discipline in Romania, and a theoretical founding of the possible futures of the discipline for the next century.

Until the nineties, a singular theoretical profile—while still a representative of the first mode of doing comparative literature—was Adrain Marino, who emulated Étiemble’s idea of a *comparative poetics*, while developing the concept of “dialectical invariables” or “constants” from Basil Munteanu’s French works into a theory of “cultural invariants”. His singularity is attested by his most profound rooting of the comparative

act in theory and method. In this respect, Adrain Marino's attempt to code "the idea of literature" in his huge comparative work remains as admirable as it is solitary, in spite of the existence of other methodological attempts, such as "typologism" (Alexandru Dima) or "thematism" (Tudor Papu).

This partition between aestheticians and historians is an actual reflection of what was going on in the literary practice in the sixties and seventies, where "a sort of painful aesthetic amorality was in place, [...] a formalist refuge, on the one side, and a dreamlike history that was in fact anti-historical, on the other" (Vianu 2016, 164). Even so, dealing with European literature at the time was perceived by Romanian intellectuals as being more morally rewarding, as well as aesthetically gratifying. A great deal of classical European and Russian literature was translated in the fifties, sixties, and seventies, in a campaign of the communist regime to either turn to ideologically comfortable or safe literary models (the classics), or to mould Romanian literature according to socialist realist patterns (the Soviet writers). Amidst this campaign, a more interesting one began in the sixties and remained strong until the eighties, translating literary theory by the Russian Formalists, the Geneva school, the French post-structuralists, but also Paul van Tieghem or American theorists like Northrop Frye or Wayne C. Booth. In fact, while René Wellek was still forbidden in his country of origin (the former Czechoslovakia, where the quality of life was undoubtedly better than in communist Romania, just as were civil freedoms), Wellek was translated into Romanian in the sixties and seventies with several titles, including his seminal work on literary theory that he co-authored with Austin Warren.

In spite of this availability, the theoretical mode of literary reflection in Romania did not emerge until well into the eighties, when an entire generation of fiction writers and poets turned theoretical, and—infused with this translated bibliography and also extensive readings from Anglo-American post-modernist writers—created a literary textualist trend, undergirded by strong meta-textual and meta-literary support. It should be said that Romanian literary criticism and comparatism were—at least until the nineties—profoundly anti-theory. This resistance to theory and method in the establishment of Romanian literary culture took comparative literature away from the scientific path and along a more impressionistic, essayistic one. Comparative assessment was mainly left to the ineffable rules of the "aesthetic taste", so comparative literature did not have too much social prestige as long as it called for method and theory. Nevertheless, in the unwritten hierarchy of the national-based humanities, comparative literature achieved a consequential role of regulator of the relationships between centre and periphery, analysing how different cores

of cultural power irradiated towards “smaller” and “minor” cultures, in particular the Romanian one.

3. Beyond comparative literature: intersectional passings

A good chance was lost in this respect by European comparative literature in general, but by East-European ones in particular, when the international project of Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz fell by the wayside. In 1877, while founding “Acta comparationis litterarum universarum” at the University in Cluj, Lomnitz had in mind a world-literature project, displaced from any national tradition. His democratic perspective over cultures went so far as to state equal cultural representativity for all nations within this project and the dismantling of hierarchical systems opposing major to minor cultures, central to peripheral literatures, strong to weak nations. Utopian as it sounds, the chance of a mutually beneficial cultural partnership among all cultures might have elicited different results in regard to present-day comparatism everywhere, had Lomnitz’s project not remained echoless in the following years after his groundbreaking manifesto.

Going back to the second mode of understanding and practising comparative literature in Romania, one can see two clear trends here as well: the first one is strongly influenced by cultural studies and is characterized by an extra-literary expansion towards other fields (social practices, media, film, visual culture); the second one maintains a literary focus, while shifting from comparative literature “proper” to a “world literatures” frame. Among the most important theoretical choices of present-day Romanian comparatists, *postcommunist studies* (see Spiridon, Cesereanu, Ștefănescu, Dobrescu, Lăcătuș), deriving from postcolonial theories, have a special place, since the topic has been in the middle of hot debates, both content-related (what were the specifics of Romanian communism) and methodology-related (is it advisable to use postcolonial theories in a non-colonized context?). They tend to overflow the literary field towards the larger field of cultural studies, but their focus is (post)communist life, revaluations and memory sites. This partitioned attention is also characteristic of *multicultural studies*, also practised as a derivation of postcolonial theory. Another frequent approach comes from psychoanalytical comparatism and imagination studies: the *study of the imaginary* (“l’imaginaire”, see Braga 2007). It complements a psychosociological view of culture with a hermeneutical reading of symbols, images, and cultural positions. Once again, mythology, sociology, anthropology, and sometimes medical humanities lend their expertise to this psychoanalytical approach, where the literary is not the exclusive

object anymore, but shares focus with other media. Gender studies are used more to question the aesthetic canon than to propose alternative ones, since the blatant patriarchalism of the Romanian literary establishment, largely supported even by female writers, makes it difficult for feminist scholars to effectively introduce their works in the scholarly and university vulgate (see Burta-Cernat 2011). Translation studies and world literature studies, supported by a world-system frame, seem to be the next big thing among the methodological choices of Romanian comparatists. There is a shared perception of their co-dependency and a growing interest among Romanian scholars in their development and creation possibilities.

A visible difference should be stated between the practice of comparative studies, as shortly describe above, and the teaching of comparative literature. With regard to the latter, the institutional situation of comparative literature is quite grim. Before university years, the literary education of Romanian students only includes sparse elements of comparative and world literature, under the improper name of “universal literature”. There are no separate manuals, text-books or separate hours for that, rather they are introduced during classes of Romanian language and literature, as counterparts of Romanian literature or to support teaching trends, literary periods or genres. To a large extent, teachers’ choice of material decides how much world literature is read and if a comparative approach is involved or not. At University level, comparative literature is taught within Faculties of Letters only, and they periodically undergo hour cuts due to the constrictive terms of the Bologna agreement, signed by Romania in the late nineties, which require the finalizing of undergraduate programs in three years, as opposed to four or five as it was two decades ago. Since I developed a detailed analysis of teaching comparative literature in contemporary Romania elsewhere (Ursa 2013, 58-65), I will sum up this topic here by saying that the choice of number of hours devoted to comparative literature and the approaches taught belongs to each faculty. This is why significant differences appear: for instance, in Cluj there is a separate Department of Comparative Literature (since 2002) and a separate three-year program for undergraduates, plus a two-year master’s program, but only two semesters of comparative literature for the students with other majors; while in Bucharest the same is done in the absence of a specialized department, and in Timisoara courses of comparative literature are offered only within the Romanian Studies program. The lowest number of hours of comparative literature are taught at the University of Iassy, while the highest are taught in Brasov. While all the faculties gave in to the cultural studies hype and included extra-literary elements in their teaching of comparative literature, the

general trend is a traditional focus on the great books and a historical and typological survey of genres, literary trends and cultural models.

4. The translated lives of minor cultures

Before 2000, translation studies were quasi-absent from comparative literature practice, both in research and teaching, even in times of high translational traffic. In fact, their development is barely picking up (see Ursa 2018, 315-317) in the last decade, under the influence of foreign theory on translation, especially Venuti, Basnett and Casanova. Input from Wallerstein's models from world-systems theory has proved crucial yet again in the negotiation of alterities in translation, and also in admitting to the "minor" East-European literatures' contribution to the European literary heritage. The sense of "minor" here is neither the deprecativ one of cultural imperialism, nor the one given to the term by Deleuze and Guattari (1986) referring to a form of writing against the current, present in Kafka and in other differential practices of literary representation. I go more in the direction of Venuti's understanding of "minoritizing translation" as a form of anti-assimilationist negotiation of meaning.

The operability of terms such as "weak" or "minor" literatures is obvious today, in the context in which

the most remote of all, and utopian, remains the vision of universal world literatures representing equitably the world's literatures in their reciprocal relations and dependencies (D'haen 2013, 8).

A minor culture pertains to a minor nation that

designates a lack of political agency and cultural significance, when compared to a major nation. A minor nation thus shares the same categories of definition as the major nation and participates in the same fantasies of power and significance; it simply fails where the major succeeds. [...] The minor is not a failed state or a potentially great one, but a translated nation. (Cotter 2014, 1-2)

The idea of "translated nations" is a valid possibility of working outside the frame of national literatures without—at the same time—forgetting about national issues.

The main challenges that comparatism faces in Romania today stem from this awareness of one's own displacement, be it geographical, social, cultural or methodological, and this is why a translational approach to comparatism becomes important. Within the settled, national paradigm,

topics such as the exile or the diaspora have been connected to a traditional idea of translation: that of a passage from a source to a target, which entailed transformations of both the message, and the agent performing the passage. In such a context, comparative literature had to tackle the bringing together of (at least) two cultures, to establish the source, the target, “the homologies” or “similarities”, and the message with its subsequent alterations (influences, dependencies, etc.).

However, this paradigm has been rendered dysfunctional ever since the transnational possibilities arose in transfer situations: they entailed an ongoing, mobile negotiation of cultural meaning and value, in the absence of the traditional decision about identity, and in the absence of the comfort of situatedness, which reassured the stability of the source-target dynamics so far. Not only writing about exile has been changed by this relocation of paradigm, but also its study. Issues of cultural mobility have affected the representations and the cultural prestige of ideas such as “*nostalgic identities*” or the “*motherland*”. When contemporary exile writers have expressed doubt about their identities or about their willingness to self-assign a national identity, the homogeneity of the comparative act in source-target contexts broke. Displacement and misplacement affected not only migrant identities, but also the methodological instruments of “making” comparative studies. While for some parts of literary production nostalgia remained untouched and it was obvious that it involved border trauma, relocation, reappropriation of reality, as well as dealing with acculturation, enculturation, or assimilation, for other parts things were less clear in identity terms. In a way, this brought about a new identity crisis in comparative studies as well, where contents had to wait for methodologies to be upgraded. “Writing outside the nation” (see Seyhan 2001) led to thinking literary practice beyond the nation, and imposed “studying comparative literature outside the nation” as well.

There are some solutions to this methodological readaptation that deserve attention. A first possibility is the adaptation of methods like those involved in the *histoire croisée* approach (see Zimmermann 2006, 30-50), or other similar approaches of the relational type: *shared histories*, *entangled histories*, *connected histories*. Assimilating features from transfer studies and comparative literature, these types of approaches are better suited to deal with concepts such as “floating identities”, or “fuzzy identities”, and with the heterogeneity of microcultures hidden in the homogeneity of the national culture. Their methodologies presuppose and start from the asymmetries involved in cultural analysis by the researcher’s involvement (linguistic, cultural, disciplinary, practice-related).

A good example are the microcommunities and microcultures of allogeous ethnicity from the contact zones of Western Romania. The polylogical communication taking place in these communities leads to the commingling of various ethnic and national contents that offer rich working material to comparative literature (see the publications of the Timisoara group called “A Treia Europa”/“The Third Europe”, 1997-2001). Multicultural histories and spaces have been invisibly intercrossing under the shadow of Romanian national culture, which includes them all under the regulating label of “cohabiting nationalities”. Their shared histories, memories and emotions were made to follow one single model during communist times, with the help of the same internationalist ideology that was used in the former USSR to make very different cultures look similar. For example, the idea of a “Romanian-German language” (*Rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, see Bican 2012, 25-26) was fashioned by the official culture to indicate the national assimilation of an existent microculture. However, while many of the Swabians and German writers in Romania were fooled into believing this was a recognition of their own ethnic difference, the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (a countercultural group of young German-language writers) exposed the ideological tactic for what it was and decided to fight its provincialism as “a minority within the minority”, working, thinking and writing “against a minority” (Richard Wagner quoted by Diaconu 2018, 135-155).

This disengagement with both national identity, and ethnic identity in non-exilic contexts should constitute a favorite present-day context of analysis from a relational approach point of view. Herta Müller, a former member of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* and a Nobel prize winner in 2009, was acknowledged at the time of her win, by a part of the Romanian public, as “the Romanian Nobel”, in spite of the fact that she did not use Romanian in her writing.⁴ However, German literary critics have pointed out that her German language is strange and particular, a language that does not exist in the linguistic atlases of the world, but is rather imagined and highly poetic. It mixes a historically frozen form of the German language with idioms and structures of Romanian grammar, in a seemingly poetic code that individualized Herta Müller’s novels just as much as her subjects—that shocked national sensitivities and were interpreted as instances of *Anti-Heimatliteratur*. When asked about her relationship to this non-maternal language that surrounded her from the official culture, Müller affirmed:

⁴ With the exception of an avant-garde collage-poem entitled *Este sau nu este Ion* [*To Be or Not to Be Ion*]. Iassy: Editura Polirom, 2005.

I have said many times that I believe Romanian language writes with me, even if I never write in Romanian, not even a sentence. But Romanian language takes part in the German language I use in writing. Because I cannot separate in my head what I have from one language and what from the other. There are things I have lived, images I have remembered and the languages get entangled. I cannot split my life between two languages, it doesn't work this way, it's pointless and I don't want to do it. [Rep. Do we have multiple identities?] I have none. It's just a word, [...] it doesn't really mean anything. I don't use it, because I believe it to be entirely artificial, just used to avoid what is real about yourself. (see Adamesteanu 2009)

5. Disconnected homes, dysfunctional identities

A different challenge is laid before comparatists by the literature of migrant Romania, by writers who are far from being national and much rather fulfil the conditions of the “flexible citizenship” (Ong 1999): socio-geographical mobility and connection, multiple cultural and linguistic identities, the choice of new nomadism. To be fair, this is a challenge to be addressed by all European countries at once, but in Romania it still lacks a systematic and methodological approach. Before going any further, a very important specificity of comparative studies in Romania should be pointed out: the inertia of thinking of comparative literature as a theory and practice that oppose those of the study of national literature is still effective today. By and large, when engaging in comparative studies, Romanian humanities scholars do not look towards Romanian literature and culture. Especially those involved in aesthetic comparatism, or in thematology and even in imagination studies rarely choose Romanian subjects for their research. Even with some exceptions (involving comparisons or influence studies on Romanian versus foreign authors, works, or trends), studies conducted on Romanian contents have remained (in scholarly perception) within the boundaries of literary history or sociology. Some old-school comparatists still refuse the idea that “world literature” approaches are closer to comparative literature than to national literary history. Things started to change in the last decade, when more integrative approaches of Romanian subjects were published⁵: they are

⁵ Although most of the Romanian comparatists today follow more than one trend of comparative literature, increased mobility characterizes the younger generation. Statistically, they publish much of their comparatist work abroad, in English, French or German, while taking a more localized stance in their research published in Romanian (sometimes on Romanian and regional subjects). Word literature

based on good quality comparative work, both in a methodological and in a theoretical way. This is one of the reasons why I chose to insist, in this part of my study, on the most urgent readjustments of comparatist approaches to contemporary cultural mobility realities and on examples and illustrations from a Romanian problematic. This particular cultural situation posits a change in the available “perspectives on familiarity” (Greenblatt 2010) and a good starting point for nuancing the crucial aspects of de-territorialization and de-nationalization.

For a lot of contemporary writers, being national is just a side-effect of individuality. Mircea Cărtărescu is probably the best known contemporary Romanian writer, and he unwillingly concentrates the nation’s hope for a Nobel prize in literature, along with Norman Manea. Asked about his group and national allegiances, he projects a disconnected, magnanimous self with whom his readers are already familiar from his visionary neo-Romantic fictions:

Surely, there are many literatures, but to me only my writing is real, for it is my way to my innermost self. Nobody would go where I go, nobody would live inside my head, nobody could feel my tooth ache. This is the reason why even the worst writer in the world sees his or her writings as good and truthful, for they see them with entirely different eyes than the works of others. And they are right to do so. To them, only their own writing is true, all the rest is but dream and illusion. (see Chivu 2015)

However, when reappraised in the context of cultural mobility, the linguistic aspect acquires new and enlarged proportions. For instance, statements of artistic identity become necessarily linked to statements of linguistic national affiliation, and even more so in the cases of writers living abroad. Norman Manea, a Romanian writer of Jewish ethnicity, living abroad, has written only in Romanian and always maintained his belonging to Romanian literature:

Cioran left when he was 25-26 and he ended up a great stylist of French language. But check his confessions on the ordeal he went through and on what it means to write a love letter with the dictionary in your hands. Nabokov is not a good example, because he came from a wealthy, educated Russian family. As a child, he had a nanny who spoke three

subjects and forms of theoretical comparatism outside the literary field find fertile analytical ground in works by Andrei Terian, Teodora Dumitru, Alex Matei, Carmen Mușat, Cătălin Constantinescu, Ana-Karina Schneider, Alex Goldiș, Mihai Iovănel, Cristina Balinte, Cătălin Ghiță, Delia Ungureanu, and others.

languages, which he knew even before having learnt Russian, and at 16 he was at Cambridge. As for myself, I come from Burdujeni, I had no nanny whatsoever and left the country at 50, without knowing a word of English. I write in the language I grew up in and in the language that made me who I am. I live in the matrix, in the cocoon of Romanian language. (see Alexe 2013)

Instances such as Norman Manea's writing are best suited to be analyzed with means and methods belonging to the translational approach to comparative literature, since the homogeneity and uniformity of a national-based practice are entirely missing, in spite of his constant faithfulness to the Romanian language. Manea's subjects are related to his years in Romania and to his family's displacement experiences, but they are even closer to the idea of an identity in motion, of a comfort of perpetual exile. The symbol of a snail's house, always physically accompanying its owner wherever it goes, part and parcel of his or her being, is central to Manea's writing. Apart from mobility, this underlines an exilic conscience and an appropriation of exile as homeland living, with time made space and with space contracted to a manageable memory house.

I further venture that even this awareness of exile has been modified by the recent migratory phase of European history. To explain, I have to address a very sensitive topic for Romanian culture, which is the magnitude of Romanian migration rates (see Sandu 2006). The fact that they are the world-highest for migration in times of peace is an indication of intense social and economic frustration, and sometimes of political and ideological despair. After a period of "primary exploration" between 1990 and 1995, when the migration rate was a predictable 5%, a "secondary wave" grew to 6-7% between 1996 and 2001. After 2002, and especially after 2007, when Romania became an EU member and its citizens gradually gained free access to the Schengen space, the migration rate went up to 10-28% and is still growing today, in the context of popular political discontent. Much of these rates are represented by economic migration, and it consists of families or just parents who (often temporarily) work abroad to economically support their children and families at home. This seemingly beneficial (for the wellbeing of those families) movement has tragic consequences: thousands of children are left home in the care of their grandparents or elder brothers, sometimes underage themselves. As a result, an entire generation of Romanian children are affected by social and psychological traumas related to this symbolical abandonment and the phenomenon is increasingly attracting

public attention. Apart from good novels on the topic (Liliana Corobca, *Kinderland*, 2013; Dan Lungu, *The Little Girl Who Played God*, 2016), a TV documentary series was aired in 2013 as part of a project entitled *The Exodus of the Mothers*. It was meant to voice both the parents' pain and reasons for leaving their children, and their children's tragedy. Liliana Nechita was one of the featured migrants, and later she wrote her story as a worker in Italy, under the title *Bitter Cherries* (2014). When asked about her title, she answered:

[Why the title *Bitter cherries*?] Because my stories are many, minute and bitter. But you know what? The bitter-cherry tree is one of the most resilient of trees. They are long lived and they withstand sharp winds and draught. We, the migrants, have become strong because we knew how to withstand bitterness. And we haven't lost hope of going back. Home. (see Nechita)

In the national paradigm, works by writers like Liliana Nechita would not count to Romanian literary studies, both because she would not be "aesthetic enough", and because she writes in Romanian to be translated into Italian, then published in Italy for a Romanian public who lives abroad. While she is virtually unknown in Romania, she enjoys a certain popularity in Italy, not only among the numerous Romanian migrants whose stories she tells, but also among the Italians. The magnitude of this phenomenon alone requires proper tools of social, cultural, and literary understanding. Another similar success story, with a consumerist side to it, is those Ingrid Beatrice Coman, who is a Romanian economic migrant as well, but chose to write a mixture of sentimental stories about the life of Romanian women working abroad and of soft erotica, all in Italian, while still self-identifying as a Romanian writer: "I probably belong to all cultures and to none. We are what we are regardless of the language we express ourselves in. [...] People are the same wherever you go" (see Turlea).

The refusal of—or indifference towards—national identity is the clearest effect of cultural mobility in action, just as much as their counterpoise—the resurgence of violent and contrastive affirmation of national, ethnic and group identities. In the context of a massive migration from Romania, these high fluctuations in the self-assignment of regional identity and local belonging, complemented by the demands for a collective acknowledgement of cultural differences have stressed the value of translation as a powerful social and cultural tool. Romanian contemporary writers who still live in Romania also bring voices of migrants and marginal people in their own creations because they already

credit the negotiations of cultures following the national epoch. These characters express a paradigm shift, they are already between cultures, between identities, in-between citizens or “born translated”. It is not a simple coincidence that these writers began to include transnational, inter-crossing and transgressive topics in their writing under the impact of reading postcolonial writers such as Isabel Allende, Salman Rushdie, Juan Rulfo, but also Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, or Elif Shafak, or of increasing reading of contemporary writers from neighboring states and from local microcultures (*i.e.* the Hungarian-language writers of Northern Romania).

More and more contemporary Romanian fiction writers use translational voices to address transnational audiences, rather than patriotic needs. Particularly after 2010, a series of fictions written by Romanian writers explore themes such as migration, social inability to adapt and gender otherness. On the other hand, the comparatist today is forced to pay attention to a more and more vocal caveat that the transnational, global world imposes un-differentiation, and—in reaction—virulent movements of re-differentiation. This makes the comparative task all the more difficult when one has to work “on the principle of an international homogeneity that derives its efficacy from the conflictive heterogeneity of national and local dis-functionality” (Kadir 2012, 65). It is the task of comparative studies in general and of comparative literature in particular to find methodological resources and theoretical creativity to explain and make sense of this *conflictive heterogeneity of local dysfunctionality*.

The list of possibilities sketched above, in the hope that each entry could turn into a “future of comparative literature” in Romania, looks a lot like a to-do list for the near decade or so. One more thing should be added to this project: Romanian culture has exported not only writers that have contributed to other national heritages (French in particular: Benjamin Fondane, Eugene Ionesco, Emile Cioran, Tristan Tzara etc.), but also theorists that have shaped their disciplinary fields after their international adoption. Thomas Pavel, Matei Călinescu, Alexandu Ciorănescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Mihai Spărioiu, Marcel Cornis-Pope, Christian Moraru, Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu and others are in themselves not only inspirational landmarks for generations of comparatists (not only in Romania), but also living guarantees of the effectiveness of placing oneself, as a comparative scholar, in a perpetual state of translation, against preemptive truths and presuppositions of equidistance, but for a continuous, present involvement in cultural, translational negotiation.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN ESTONIA: TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC APPROACH

KATRE TALVISTE

The term designating comparative literary scholarship, “võrdlev kirjandusteadus”, has established itself in Estonian relatively recently.¹ Institutionally, it is present mainly in the name of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature—*Eesti Võrdleva Kirjandusteaduse Assotsiatsioon*. The association was founded in 1994 and shortly afterwards became a member of the International Association of Comparative Literature. Based at the University of Tartu since its foundation, the ECLA brings together comparatist scholars from all major Estonian research institutions and provides a constant meeting ground for Estonian and international comparative literary scholarship via its journal *Interlitteraria*² and the conferences held in Tartu at two-year intervals.

The term “võrdlev kirjandusteadus” has also been used by the Tallinn University in description of a recent Master programme, some courses and teaching positions. Professor emeritus Tiina Aunin (2003), former Professor of comparative literature, has published an introduction to the discipline of that name. Aunin’s handbook, originally intended as the first of a series, focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of comparative literature, which is an important aspect in Tallinn University’s comparatist scholars’ work.

At the University of Tartu, the Estonian name of the discipline is “World Literature” (“maailmakirjandus”), which reflects the main orientation of the university today, as well as its longstanding traditions. The University of Tartu was founded in the seventeenth century. It established strong foundations in

¹ This study was supported by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (IUT20-1), and by the (European Union) European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies).

² See <https://ojs.utlib.ee/index.php/IL>

literary studies in the nineteenth century, adopted Estonian as its main working language in 1919, and opened a Chair of Comparative Literature in 1980. The discipline was then named “foreign literature” (“väliskirjandus”), but later renamed “world literature” (“maailmakirjandus”). The latter term has been used in Estonian since the nineteenth century to designate the object of comparative literary scholarship. The use of the term was discouraged during the Soviet regime when a specific hierarchy of cultures was imposed for ideological and political reasons, and when literature was categorised accordingly. All literary practices, such as scholarship, teaching, translation, and publishing, had to prioritise Russian literature (with additional distinctions made between Soviet Russian and earlier Russian literature), then literature from other Soviet and socialist countries, and had restricted access to all other, especially Western literatures (covered by the term “foreign literature”). After the end of the Soviet occupation, the traditional approach and terminology originating from the Goethean concept of *Weltliteratur* was resumed. Liina Lukas (2015, 131), associate professor of comparative literature, has summed these developments as follows:

Having roots in the studies of rhetoric and poetics in the Academia Gustaviana founded in 1632, comparative literary history in the German-language Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat (reestablished in 1802) was initially a topic for professors of classical philology, while shortly after moving under the lectureship of German language and then, during the period of Russification, to the department of Russian language and literature. Beginning in 1904, comparative literature found its place in the chairs of Latvian and Estonian, where it developed as a modern disciple in the Estonian-language University of Tartu at the time of prof. Gustav Suits in the 1920s. The Soviet period formally maintained the World Literature environment of the Estonian literary canon under the label of “foreign literature”, but the notion of foreign literature narrowed being limited to the established literary canon of the West, and even that selectively through those whom the Marxist ideology considered “progressive”. “Foreign literature”, but mainly its relationship with Estonian literature, was under ideological pressure to the extent that it was more rational to deal with it as a close phenomenon boiling in its own juices. At the same time Russian literature was pushed to the fore. Its influence and role in the development of Estonian literature had to be emphasised. However, it was precisely Russian philology where Tartu literary studies were given an impulse, which gave the impetus to several disciples in Tartu as well as elsewhere, while also creating a completely new field—semiotics. The theory of periphery as an area, where semiotic processes accelerate, and the creative and dialogical function of the borders developed in Tartu by

Juri Lotman, explains a great deal about the history of Comparative Literature in Tartu: the peripheral location of Tartu, its changing identity turns out to be the crossroad and meeting point of diverse cultures. This has facilitated the comparative approach of cultures and sees the only possible methodology of literary studies in comparison.

The historical circumstances that Lukas briefly refers to may need considerable clarification for readers who are not familiar with the history of the Baltic region and Estonia in particular (see, for example, Kasekamp 2010 or Minaudier 2007 for a detailed account of Estonian history; Hasselblatt 2006 for Estonian literary history). However, even without further factual background, the fundamental trait is obvious and emphasised: Estonian culture, including Estonian literature, was born in and has evolved in a multicultural environment. The territory has historically been populated by several cultural communities with strong ties to major European cultures, which has contributed to a constant awareness of other cultures' existence within these communities, including that of ethnic Estonians who make up the majority of the population and represent the dominant culture of today's Estonia. The socio-cultural situation was quite different as recently as the nineteenth century, when the Estonian-speaking population had a low social status, mostly that of peasants barely emancipated from serfdom and making slow progress towards landownership and some administrative control over local affairs. Since the thirteenth century, the region had been politically and economically controlled by the Baltic German nobility, who maintained that control for most of the nineteenth century, even though the territory had by then been overtaken by the Russian Empire. The German nobility was granted a special status and autonomy in the Baltic provinces, revoked only in the 1890s, when a strong Russification policy was implemented.

At that time, Estonian was on its way to being a literary language used in literature, journalism, criticism, and teaching, but not yet in academic research and higher education. After Latin had lost its predominance in the academic field, German was the main scholarly language in Tartu, and German-speaking Europe a major source of intellectual influences. However, the proximity of Russia and the importance of broader intercultural exchanges in the Europe shaped by the Enlightenment and Romanticism brought in other influences and a growing awareness of cultural diversity, both as an object of study and as a model for thought. The nineteenth-century studies and early twentieth-century mainstream were largely comparative-historical in their method. During the following periods, that type of approach has remained strong in Estonia, as has been

observed in studies focusing on Estonian literary scholarship in the twentieth century (Hennoste 2005) and even more recently (Tarvas 2014).

The penchant for the comparative-historical mode, which was characteristic of the nineteenth-century positivism, is undoubtedly related to the circumstances surrounding the emergence and development of Estonian literary research. The national awakening in the nineteenth century, which arose from the Romanticist ideas of local intellectuals and the increasingly unstable socio-economical and political situation in the Baltic provinces, launched an active production of literature in the Estonian language. This emerging and rapidly evolving literature needed its own histories in order to be contextualised and validated as an object of study, and to become the focus of an independent and fully functional literary system. The first thorough history of Estonian literature, *Main Features of the Estonian Literary History (Eesti kirjanduselo peajooni, 1912-1913*, completed by a third and a fourth volume in 1923 and in 1936), was written by Mihkel Kampmaa (1867-1943). The work remained a major reference for decades. Although Kampmaa's goal is to describe the evolution of Estonian literature, that is, a single national literature, his history is essentially a comparatist work. Kampmaa bases his periodisation and terminology largely on European literature, showing how Estonian literature emerged in the context of Enlightenment and Romanticism, and then developed during the Realist and Impressionist eras, all the while in contact with these currents. To describe other literatures for Estonian readers and to situate the Estonian literature in that context has remained an important task for Estonian literary scholars. Endless examples could be given, of which I choose here the somewhat playful monograph that Harald Peep (1931-1998), founder of the Chair of Comparative Literature in Tartu, published towards the end of his career. His *Three Bodies, All Dead (Kolm laipa, kõik surnud, 1996)* is an overview of the crime fiction genre. It first describes its main characteristics and compares various classics of the genre in the context of the established categories; then it briefly outlines the history of crime fiction in Estonian literature within the background of its Western origins. This type of comparatist study has proven to be fruitful and is actively practiced in Estonia.

Literary history has remained the focus of interest for researchers partly because of the ideological pressure of the Soviet period as well. It forced upon scholars and critics the task of redescribing literature in ideologically convenient terms, which, in turn, necessitated yet another intense period of reexamining and rewriting literary history after the Soviet occupation ended in 1991. After 1991, an intense period of academic and critical discussions began, many dealing with the necessity

of repairing the ruptures in cultural continuity imposed by the Soviet regime and of catching up with development of critical and theoretical thought elsewhere in the world. An outstanding example is the series of articles about Modernism that Tiit Hennoste published in the journal *Vikerkaar*, one of the main forums for literary debates for the general intellectual public since 1986. In the twenty-five articles he published from 1993 to 1997, Hennoste outlines the characteristics of Western Modernism as regards to its poetical and socio-cultural manifestations, and then searches for similar configurations in Estonian literary history, coming to the conclusion that a truly Modernist literary situation never developed in Estonia in the twentieth century, although Modernist tendencies were pronounced during certain short periods. The topic attracted many other critics and scholars, and the debate eventually led to a number of studies and related issues which continue to inspire research nowadays. Interdisciplinary studies of manifestations of various aspects of Modernism in different arts are an important part of comparatist work in this field.

Hennoste's premise represents one of the most persistent ways in which the awareness of other literatures has manifested itself over time: comparing Estonian literature, in some aspect, to a preexistent model elsewhere. Numerous studies and pieces of criticism have focused on comparing Estonian poetics and literary practices to phenomena observed in another literature or in the global literary field. This is not an unexpected approach in a culture that has evolved with a constant awareness of others and often deliberately shaped itself after their example. It can also be a fruitful approach, providing critics and scholars with external points of reference for exploring local phenomena and discovering their specific characteristics.

The shortcomings of this contrastive approach are also obvious: it prioritises characteristics that mirror in some way those of another literature, which carries the risk of leaving other, potentially more unique traits, unexplored. Also, it has a tendency to standardise literary phenomena: starting from something that exists or has been done in one literature, it ends up describing another in terms of having or lacking that same thing. Determining what one literature has or lacks in comparison to another can be a very fruitful ground for observation, but it also takes great caution to avoid falling into an essentialist or teleological assumption that literature as such can evolve only through a single series of stages that each literature has to reach, in a given order, and preferably at the same pace as the others.

Jüri Talvet, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Tartu, has tirelessly spoken up against the risks of excessively contrastive thinking in comparative literary research. He has emphasised the need for a synthetic approach that would reveal the symbiotic nature of culture and literature. Talvet argues that literary scholarship must never lose touch with the experiential quality of literature—the individual poetical characteristics and historical circumstances of a literary work and its impact on the reader. Therein lies, for Talvet (2005, 47), the task of comparative literary research—to maintain a dialogue between different cultural and subjective realities and their representations:

I suppose that at the time when such a heavy accent in thinking is falling on *episteme*, to the extent that often the existence of any knowledge beyond written discourses is being denied, a constructive “post-deconstructionist” counter-thinking should focus a new interest on the *edaphos* (from Greek *ἐδαφος*—soil, ground, land, territory) of literary (cultural) research. By *edaphos* I mean the *ur-ground* from which *episteme* departs. I do not deny that *episteme* possesses a self-creative capacity, yet I claim that any *episteme*, however sophisticated or conceptualized, has its deeper roots in a kind of *edaphos*—a reality that is not restricted exclusively to *episteme* or written discourses representing it.

[...] I suppose the very nature of comparison, inherent in comparative studies, is not only related to *episteme* but also, significantly and substantially, to *edaphos*, the object-premise and departing position of research. Comparison is knowledge, an *episteme* that compares itself to other (different) knowledge, and at the same time it is knowledge that departs from the analysis of several (different) literary (cultural, but also vital) phenomena. It relates “self” to “other” in literature, as well as reality in literature (as “self”) to reality beyond literature (as “other”).

This premise gives a new methodological status to literary history and historiography, adding to its constant importance in the Estonian literary scholarship. Historiography is not a matter of positivist description, but a mode of reflexion on the reality that literature itself is and the reality that it seeks to express:

Last but not least, in the mutual relationship between comparative *edaphos* and *episteme*, literary history has had and will probably always have a key role. Literary history itself can be viewed as an essential comparative *edaphos*, or at least as a wide intersection of *episteme* and *edaphos*, from which all kinds of discourses on literature depart. At the same time, the difficulties of constructing and writing literary histories are well known, especially as the older type of literary histories—which, as I already

mentioned, have often been just histories of societies and nations, rather than histories of literary creation—seems to be exhausted and hardly looks satisfactory. (*ibid.*, 53-54)

The synthesis of diachronic and synchronic approach is characteristic of two lines of research of essentially comparatist nature that have developed in Estonia over the past several decades. In 1978, Jaak Põldmäe (1942-1979) published a monograph about Estonian versification, an original and systematic analysis of verse forms used in Estonian poetry from the seventeenth century to the 1970s. The essentially comparatist quality of this work is obvious in its diachronic, multicultural, and local aspects too. Estonian versification and its evolution over time are studied in the context of other poetical traditions that Estonian literature has come into contact with, and the characteristics of Estonian poetics are determined by comparing numerous individual authors' work as well as the structural traits of various different types of texts. Põldmäe's study built a foundation for further research in versification and metrics, currently pursued by several scholars and represented by recent or ongoing research projects such as *Estonian Versification and Poetic Culture in Finno-Ugric and Comparative Perspective* and *Semantics of Estonian Verse from the Perspective of Cultural Semiotics* (both led by Professor Mihhail Lotman, Tallinn University and University of Tartu). The emergence of this type of research into poetics was largely due to the influence of Yuri Lotman (1922-1993), whose work developing structuralist thought and semiotics inspired his colleagues at the University of Tartu in the 1970s and continues to offer methodological foundations today.

The strong awareness of other literatures, with the consequent importance of translated literature, created conditions for the emergence of translation studies. This interest was undoubtedly also fueled by the development of semiotics, where translation processes of all levels are one of the key issues. Somewhat paradoxically, the otherwise unreasonable division of literary scholarship by languages, which was the practice during the Soviet period, and which led to a perceptible lack of communication between specialists of different literatures (while contributing, however, to a decent general training in linguistics of all specialists of literature), may also have been a contributing factor. Focusing on a single language or linguistic area gave respectable competences therein, while translation as a practice created some common ground for discussion. Translation has always been an essential part of Estonian literary culture and an unavoidable point of discussion in debates concerning Estonian literature. Its position in the Estonian literary field

and its impact on Estonian poetics are issues of constant relevance. In order to address such issues, researchers need to adopt a comparatist approach. Translation history and poetics have recently been or are currently being studied in the framework of projects such as *Towards a Pragmatic Understanding of Translations in History* (led by Dr. Anne Lange, Tallinn University), *Bibliographic Database of Estonian Translation History 1900-1991* (led by Associate Professor Elin Sütiste, University of Tartu), and *Ideology of Translation and Translation of Ideology: Mechanisms of Cultural Dynamics under the Russian Empire and Soviet Power in Estonia in the Nineteenth-Twentieth Centuries* (led by Dr. Lea Pild, University of Tartu).

In addition to these universities, the main research institutions today are the Estonian Literary Museum and the Under and Tuglas Literature Center of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The two universities and the Estonian Literary Museum have joined the Center of Excellence in Estonian Studies, which was founded in 2016.¹ The comparatist nature of their work is obvious from the titles of several current research projects: *Estonian Literature in the Paradigm of Comparative Literary Research* (led by Professor Jüri Talvet, University of Tartu), *History of Baltic Literary Culture II* (led by Associate Professor Liina Lukas, University of Tartu), *Emergent Stories: Storytelling and Joint Sensemaking in Narrative Environments* (led by Professor Marina Grishakova, University of Tartu), *Formal and Informal Networks of Literature, Based on Sources of Cultural History* (led by Dr. Marin Laak, Estonian Literary Museum), *Estonia between East and West: The Paradigm of the Images of "Own", "Other", "Strange", "Enemy" in Estonian Cultures in the Twentieth Century* (led by Professor Irina Belobrovtsseva, Tallinn University), *Entangled Literatures: Discursive History of Literary Culture in Estonia* (led by Dr. Jaan Undusk, Under and Tuglas Literature Center). The narrower topics that occupy the researchers represent a variety of objects

¹ More detailed information about these institutions, their relevant structures, and their research activities can be found at their respective websites (University of Tartu research projects: <http://www.flku.ut.ee/en/research-projects>; Tallinn University research projects: <https://www.tlu.ee/en/School-of-Humanities/Research/Research-Projects>; Estonian Literary Museum: <http://www.kirmus.ee/est/info/in-english/>; Under and Tuglas Literature Centre: <http://www.utkk.ee/en/>; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies: https://www.folklore.ee/CEES/index_eng.php). These websites, as well as the Estonian Research Information System (<https://www.etis.ee/?lang=ENG>), are also a gateway to more information about and contacts with numerous scholars in the field of comparative literature.

of study and methodological approaches, but the general premise is situating the object of study in relation to others and within a wider context, be it defined by historical circumstances, regional characteristics, poetics of a particular genre, etc.

Given the size of the general population in Estonia (about one and a half million people) and, proportionally, the academic community within it, the number of research groups and individual scholars involved in comparative literary studies is considerable. While no rigorous count has been taken, it can be rather safely estimated that it far outweighs the number of scholars focusing on an essentially non-comparative object or method. More to the point, no such count could be taken with any degree of credibility, since there usually is a comparative aspect involved in all research topics that come into an Estonian literary scholar's purview. A case in point can be presented in the form of two recent issues of the academic journal *Methis*, which recently dedicated a special thematic issue to comparative literature (Lukas and Kurvet-Käosaar 2016), followed by a free-topic issue (Laak 2017), where the subjects addressed are no less comparatist by nature (for example, *The Role of Cultural Festivals in the Development of Cultural Relations between the Estonian Homeland and Diaspora*, Ojamaa 2017; or *Simultaneous Interpreting of Theatre Performances from Estonian into Russian from 1944 to 1991*, Sibul 2017).

The omnipresence of comparison in Estonian literary and scholarly thought is also the reason why most of the outstanding comparatist scholars of the early twentieth century remained unnamed here and even current researchers are represented by a few, albeit most significant names. Several examples above describe works that were not intentionally or institutionally comparatist, but methodologically still fall into that category, at least partly, because despite occasional forced attempts, no fruitful way has been found to discuss literature in Estonia or Estonian literature without somehow setting it into comparatist perspective. The newest developments represented by current research projects indicate that comparative thought and methodology have reached a new self-awareness, which promises interesting discoveries and discussions for the future. Instead of the long-time search for differences or similarities between Estonian literature and one or several other literatures, another problematic has moved into focus—that of complex intercultural exchanges, relations and networks. Comparative literary research in Estonia has found its main interest in the type of cultural situation it has emerged from—a constantly changing and somewhat unpredictable, but continuous and fruitful dialogue between different cultures in the shared peripheral space where they meet—and is studying this situation's patterns and dynamics.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

COMPARISON IN LITHUANIA: TRADITIONAL AND NEW IDEAS

AUSRA JURGUTIENĖ

The emergence of comparative linguistics, folklore and literature in nineteenth-century Lithuania was stimulated by ideas and trends like liberalism and democracy (with the idea of a free person in a free nation) which prevailed in all Europe at the time. Romanticism that refuted Classicism and shifted the general focus from antique literature and classical philology to ethnic works (folklore), and Positivism which stimulated a historical consciousness and helped the history of national literature to flourish were also influential.¹ The 1848-1849 revolutions and the collapse of the great Austrian, Ottoman, and Russian empires started the “Spring of Nations”—the national movements fighting for the freedom of the people of the Balkans, the Slavs and the Balts. Literature, which along with the national language was the most admired, together with the studies of Lithuanian folklore and history, had the greatest power to awaken the Lithuanian national consciousness and to unite the Lithuanian nation in the process of liberation from the Russian Empire. Lithuanian philology created the modern Lithuanian nation, which in 1918 proclaimed its Independence Act.

But the meaning of the national writer and national literature do not end with the boundaries of the national language, separating it from others. The need for transcendence of these limits, translations into other languages and comparative literary research are equally important for national literature. National literature and literary histories have fostered not only national consciousness, but also the need for a comparative perception of world literature. The ideas of Immanuel Kant also became

¹ According to René Wellek, comparison is a medical term, and the book *Comparative Anatomy* (1800) was the beginning of all the nineteenth century comparative studies.

very important to Lithuanian writers: as an immanent aesthetic value literature can go beyond its time and geographical boundaries and attract various readers. Consequently, historical research on national literature could no longer be separated from the comparative research and from the universal literature in Europe. German historical philosophy and philology that came into existence with the concept of the “spirit of the epoch”, interpreting the existence of a nation as a common culture for all its social strata, had the strongest influence for comparative studies in Lithuania. Works by German historians, especially comparative linguistics and folklore research, which elevated the Lithuanian language as one of the most valuable languages in terms of Indo-European language studies, intensified comparative historical thought among Lithuanians. We see manifestations of this process in publications by Liudvikas Rėza, Adam Mickiewicz (Mickevičius), and others. In addition to the German, Lithuanian historical comparative literature studies were influenced by ideas from Polish, French, and English works.

At the beginning of twentieth century, two Lithuanian students at the Catholic University of Fribourg defended their dissertations; these were the start of historical comparative literature studies in Lithuania. Motiejus Gustaitis highlighted the exotic connection of the sonnet genre with the Oriental (Crimean Tatar historical and geographical) motifs in his dissertation on Adam Mickiewicz’s “The Crimean Sonnets”: “In the Crimean Sonnets, we find the combined style of Oriental art with the Western style” (Gustaitis 1903, 9). Gustaitis took the idea of the national identity of the Lithuanian and Polish Commonwealth as a synthesis of the East and the West from Mickiewicz and applied it to his own written sonnet cycle.²

At the same university, Pranas Augustaitis defended his dissertation, “Lithuanian Elements in Polish Romanticism” (“Pierwiastki litewskie we wczesnym romantycyzmie Polskim”, 1911). He analyzed the relations between Polish and Lithuanian cultures, extending again Mickiewicz’s ideas about the typology of Romantic literature.

Comparative literature became very important in explaining the identity of national literature, since it is possible to understand it only by comparing it with other literatures. Stasys Šalkauskis, who defended a dissertation entitled “The Soul of the World in Vladimir Solovyov’s

² The part of the dissertation was translated into Lithuanian (“Oriental Trend in European literature”, “Orientalinė srovė Europos literatūroje”) and published in the journal *Vaivorykštė* in 1913.

Philosophy” at Fribourg University confirmed this. The geopolitical situation, the defeat of Germany during the First World War, and the collapse of Tsarist Russia prolonged the influence of Mickiewicz’s ideas and drove Lithuania to see its mission as combining different elements of the West and the East:

Realizing the synthesis of two—Eastern and—worlds [...] in one’s own civilisation is the highest calling of the nation, worth the greatest efforts, the greatest number of victims (Šalkauskis 1938, 6).

In the book, *Sur les confins de deux mondes* (1919), he stated that Lithuania, by absorbing geographically and culturally contrary surrounding influences of the rational West (Germans) and the mysterious East (Slavs), won when it was able to keep them in balance, and lost when it could not manage this. According to him, national identity is open to cultural interchange. It is a phenomenon steadily created from contrasts, as the more a nation knows the values of other nations or cultures, the more it is able to develop and enrich its own culture. Šalkauskis’ theory of Lithuanian culture as the synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures had a long and wide appeal for the Lithuanian writers of the first part of the twentieth century (Vilhelmas Storosta, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, Jonas Mačiulis) and the painter, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. Lithuanian artists and writers realized that they lived “by the boundary of two worlds and were steadily affected by the draughts of East and West” (Kubilius 1983, 67). The romanticised ethnocentric stereotype of Lithuanian culture as the synthesis of Eastern and Western culture created by Šalkauskis, Juozas Girnius and other intellectuals can be seen in two different lights. This idea was the most influential and topical in the first half of the twentieth century, but now it is interpreted mostly critically. It received strict criticism from the Lithuanian emigrant, professor at Yale University and poet Tomas Venclova, because this idea created an anachronistic national mythology lacking in self-criticism. Venclova (2007, 291) starts with Girnius, who developed Šalkauskis’ concept of national culture:

Every nation [...] has some defects, but it has virtues as well. But the Lithuanians, living in a dangerous zone, where the world of Slavs confronts the German world, are a real golden mean: they do not have their neighbour’s defects and only have their virtues [...]. Thus, [...] Juozas Girnius’ [idea] is [...] simple. The world of Slavs is the chaotic kingdom of entropy; the German world is inhuman *Ordnung*, the sphere of lifeless automatism; the small Baltic world is the only piece of the Earth where

there still is *anima naturaliter christianina*, which was basically unchanged since pagan times until nowadays. The human here creates good and only good as naturally as a silkworm making silk.

In Lithuania, the separate concept of comparative literature emerged and began to be discussed in academic publications of the University of Lithuania in Kaunas (established in 1922).

For example, Balys Sruoga (2001, 155), in his article entitled “Literary Science and its Methods” (“Literatūros mokslas ir jo metodai”, 1926), mostly based on ideas of German and French historians (Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Wilhelm Scherer, Wilhelm Dilthey, Oskar Walzel, Heinrich Wölflin, Fritz Strich, Hippolyte Taine, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve), says that comparative literature studies are linked to historic research: “An aesthete avoids comparing the work he analyses with others, whereas for an historian, comparison is the actual way leading to the truth”. Sruoga emphasised the importance of the comparative method, when speaking about the motifs that re-emerge in literature.

Sruoga, who studied at the universities of Petrograd, Moscow, and Munich, criticized the *Introduction to Literature* (1923) written by Vladas Dubas, professor of Romance literature, at Kaunas University, as he presented only Antique and Western literatures influences on Lithuanian literature and completely ignored everything from the Slavic literature. Sruoga argued with Dubas’s statement that “If Slavic literature does not exist completely, it will not in any way interfere with Western literature as it is”. He emphasized the distinctive character of Lithuanian literature and its relationship with the Slavs:

But if there were no Slavic literature, would we ourselves not have been what we are? And it is a very big question as to what has had a greater influence on our intellectuals and our literature—Slavic or Western European literature? (Sruoga 2001, 256)

In his history of Russian literature (published in 2 volumes—1931, 1932), Sruoga presented not only the most significant Russian writers, but also literary scholars, including authors of comparative literature works like Viktor Zhirmunsky (*Byron and Pushkin, from the History of the Romantic Poem* (*Байрон и Пушкин. Из истории романтической поэмы*, 1924) and *Goethe in Russian Literature* (*Гёте в русской литературе*, 1937), and Alexandr Nikolaïevitch Veselovsky “A. S. Pushkin and European Poetry” (“А. С. Пушкин и европейская поэзия”, 1899). But even Sruoga, in discussing which side had more impact on Lithuanian literature, did not negate the idea of Western and Eastern synthesis in Lithuanian

culture.

In Ignas Skrupskelis's article "Literary Science: Essence, History and Methods" ("Literatūros mokslas: jo esmė, istorija ir metodai", 1930, 179-180) comparative literature was embedded in the philological method, and had the goal of bibliographic research:

[d]espite its [comparative literature's] willingness to be recognised as a separate method, the history of literature is subjected to comparisons. Unlike the history of national literature, it stems from universal literature. Undoubtedly, comparisons of various national literatures help to generate a greater number of ideas and to get a better grasp of national idiosyncrasies. However, comparison as such is not something distinctive to be worth constituting as a separate method.

At the end of the article, the author gives a very interesting list of the seventeen newest books on comparative and world literature issues.

Moreover, Ignas Skrupskelis's dissertation, defended at Vienna University and entitled "Lithuanians in Eighteenth Century German Literature" (1932), is also worth mentioning in that context.

Antanas Vaičiulaitis, just like many of his contemporaries, was interested in French Catholic Modernism and was the first who introduced the book *La Littérature comparée* (1931) written by Paul van Tieghem in Lithuanian press. In his article "Developments in Post-War Literature" ("Pokarinės literatūros kelias"), Vaičiulaitis (1936, 11) singled out a new trend in comparative literature:

Comparative literature is one of the new phenomena, which started flourishing in the post-war period. The term "comparative literature" shall not be understood as universal literature, but rather as one which compares, *i.e.* takes Byron and analyses the impact he had on a particular author, national literature or the literature of a particular century. The French demonstrate exceptional support for this branch of literary science.

The first professional comparative work in Lithuanian was the book entitled *Naturalism and Lithuanian Literature (Natūralizmas ir lietuvių literatūra, 1936)*, by Antanas Vaičiulaitis. The definition of French naturalism (based on Auguste Comte's and Hippolite Taine's philosophy), separate naturalistic novels (by Émile Zola, Guy de Maupasant and Joris-Karl Huysmans), and their typological links with Lithuanian literature (Vincas Kudirka, Gabrielė Petkevičiaitė-Bite, Julija Beniuševičiūtė-Zymantienė, Lazdynų Pelėda) are discussed in this book.

The comparative literature research undertaken by Balys Sruoga, Ignas Skrupskelis, Juozas Ambrazevičius, and Antanas Vaičiulaitis could be defined in two ways: not only as an inseparable component of the historical approach, but also as a new trend in literary research focused on influences, recurring subjects, and genres rather than methods. The first definition opened up the door to comparative-historical literary research, yet the second definition brought us closer to the classification of literary studies later presented in René Wellek's *Theory of Literature*, which classified them into three parts, namely national, general, and comparative literature.

At that time, two major tasks were proposed for Lithuanian literary studies: the genetic study of a work (the author's biography, personality, psychology and type of spirit, socio-historical circumstances, and influences), and the receptive one, studying the intensity of the book's impact on other writers: "Genius almost always cause an entire generation of epigones" (Munnynck 1929, 152). Marc de Munnynck, a Fribourg University professor, was very influential among Lithuanian literary scholars of that time. The comparison of literatures has become relevant and has expanded in both of these research fields: the questions that influenced the writer's work and how it influenced the work of others was soon to become an integral part of the historical and monographic research of Lithuanian literature. The first half of the twentieth century witnessed sparse publications on comparative literature, which nevertheless formed the basis for traditional literary comparisons that were mainly focused on the originality of the national literature and its connections to German, Polish, and French literatures.

A similarly traditional understanding of comparative literature prevailed even in exile, after many literary researchers left occupied Lithuania in 1944 (others took up their research only in the West—Vaičiulaitis, Maciūnas, Alfonsas Šešplaukis-Tyruolis). However, the representatives of the *émigré* generation have expanded comparative literature, adding feminist and postcolonial aspects (Birutė Ciplijauskaitė, Violeta Kelertienė, Tomas Venclova³).

Another feature of Lithuanian comparative literature can be briefly

³ Some of their publications: Ciplijauskaitės *Išsipildymo neradusi moteris realistiniame romane*—the author compared the female characters Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, La Regenta, Effi Briest, *Istorinis romanas iš moteriškos perspektyvos*. Ilonos Gražytės-Maziliauskienės *Sulūžusi lėlė: keletas minčių apie moterų personažus dabartiniame Lietuvos romane*, Violetos Kelertas *Moteris moterų prozoje, Kodėl moterys tyli?*

described by the title of an article, “Lithuanian poetry on both sides of the Atlantic,” written by Tomas Venclova. In it the collapsed Lithuanian literature (diasporic and that written in Soviet Lithuania), is compared in an ideological and aesthetic way. This research can also be linked to the broader historic context and the more general question of what unites and what separates literature written in the same language, but in different geopolitical areas.

In Soviet Lithuania, especially during the Stalinist period, comparative literature studies experienced a serious downturn, since the field was dominated by works comparing Lithuanian literature only to the “great literature” of Russia, glorifying the “international proletariat” and “Soviet patriotism.” The Communist Party strongly encouraged the internationalism of the Soviet peoples, which was based on vulgar Marxist-Leninist ideology and common Russian language. During the Cold War the most influential researcher, Kostas Korsakas (1962, 14-15), was the best master of ideological phrases:

Soviet Lithuanian literature has to become a valuable part of the entire Soviet literature. [...] The brotherly idea of the cooperation of peoples based on Marxist-Leninist science, the development of international solidarity among the working people, flourished in the Soviet Union and gave wonderful fruit.

“Bourgeois” tradition and Western mentality in Soviet comparative literature were rejected, while links with Western literature were strongly controlled too.⁴

The most prominent comparative research project was carried out and published in Vytautas Kubilius’s book, *Lithuanian Literature and the Process of World Literature (Lietuvių literatūra ir pasaulinės literatūros procesas)*, (1983). It marks the academic peak of traditional Lithuanian comparative literature studies. The author ambitiously described the novelty of his book as follows: “Until recently there has not been a scholarly work that exhaustively described relations pertaining to national literature and summarised its position in the process of world literature” (*ibid.*, 21). Kubilius’s aim was to discuss and consolidate the uniqueness

⁴ The best books from Soviet period: V. Mykolaitis-Putinas, *Adomas Mickevičius ir lietuvių literatūra* (1955), D. Judelevičiaus, *Gyvasis Šekspyras* (1964), B. Masionienės, *Levas Tolstojus ir Lietuva* (1977), K. Nastopkos, *Lietuvių ir latvių literatūrų ryšiai* (1971), N. Kašėlionienė, *Viktoro Hugo kelias į Lietuvą* (1990), R. Sinkevičienės, *Lietuva J. Bobrovskio kūryboje* (1990), V. Galinio, *Naujos kryptys lietuvių literatūroje* (1974) and other.

of Lithuanian literature, despite its status as a recipient, by researching influences or comparing different literatures. The book presented the most recent works by French, German, English, Polish, and Russian theorists in brief. In essence, Kubilius utilized René Wellek's article "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" (1959) in which the author criticised the school of French comparativism for the study of literature influences and raised the significance of aesthetics and reception theory by treating national literature as an integral structure. Kubilius examined how Lithuanian literature in its entirety integrated the greatest European writers (Dante, Goethe, Baudelaire, Whitman, Maupassant, Scott). In the chapters "Echoes of Polish romanticism in Lithuanian literature", "Orientalism in Lithuanian literature", "Lithuanian literary contacts and parallels with German expressionism", "Scandinavian lessons", he discussed how the currents of European literature function in Lithuanian literature. In separate chapters he described how Lithuania has been interpreted in books by Oscar Milosz and Johannes Bobrowski. Kubilius's connections with the International Comparative Literature Association and the publication of his article on Symbolism in the Baltic states in the collective publication, *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages* (1984), serve as clear proof that his research was in line with the general standards of European comparative literature studies of the time. Kubilius (1983, 19) criticised the ideology-rich research of the impact Russian writers had on Lithuanian literature and even shifted the focus of comparison to the West:

Based on the criteria of ideological and thematic similarity, it is not difficult to detect the repercussions of Russian writers' works in Lithuanian writings. Moreover, every Lithuanian writer inevitably had to experience the influence of Maksim Gorky or Vladimir Mayakovsky, who were identified with the principles of Socialist Realism and Marxist ideology.

However, even the most academically mature book on comparative literature has not managed to avoid the compulsory ideological tinge in the foreword and final article. To be able to publish his work, the author had to downplay and suppress national pre-soviet and expatriate literary studies and was forced to praise socialism, by saying:

Comparative research became a topical task when Lithuanian literature became involved in multinational Soviet literature in 1940, taking over its ideological, thematic and stylistic commonalities (*ibid.*, 17).

He was forced to praise socialism and soviet Lithuanian literature instead,

which only “became “great” and “giving” as a result of becoming part of “the great USSR.” Donata Linčiuvienė remembers meeting Kubilius immediately after his ordeal with the censors at the publishing house and showing her his manuscript that had been all marked up in red ink: “The professor was extremely angry and upset, tears were shining in his eyes” (Kašelionienė 2006, 78).

After the fall of the USSR, Kubilius (1999, 8), in his article “Comparative studies in an open world” (“Komparatyvistika atvirame pasaulyje”) denounced the highly praised internationalism or friendship among the Soviet nations as invented rhetoric, characteristic of colonization politics:

Comparative studies were dominated by research of the impact of Russian literature in order to demonstrate loyalty and gratitude to the conquerors. [...]. Soviet culture, resulting from the concepts of slavophilism and Bolshevik Marxism, was aggressively performing the colonization function on the vast territory of Central-Eastern Europe. However, they did not manage to disperse the indigenous culture of these nations nor to kill their national languages.

Despite the strong ideological deformations traditional Lithuanian comparative literature studies were focused on two main issues: national identity and integration in European literature which had been assisted by such popular clichés as “synthesis between the West and the East” or “catching up with Europe via Lithuania.” International literary relations, the migration and typology of motifs, genres and forms, and the laws of world literature as a process of development were studied in Lithuanian traditional comparative studies. Genetic contacts and ties and typological (literary currents, genres) of different literature were studied as “there are no closed territories in the European literary continent: the same ways of thinking are valid, the same gallery of heroes works” (*ibid.*, 7).

Essential changes took place after Lithuania regained its independence in 1991. Not only had the totalitarian system and political censorship disappeared instantly, but also traditional comparative studies based on René Descartes’s claim that the truth is found through comparisons faded away together with Goethe’s words to Eckermann that humanity is entering the era of world literature (*Weltliteratur*, 1827), where all national literature will come together into an artistic synthesis of human commonality, thus human nature will be revealed in its entirety. Goethe’s ideas of centering national literature on the concept of human nature became meaningless, since science has not managed to reconstruct the Indo-European proto-language.

Now comparative literature includes a wide variety of approaches, completely departing from its tradition, when scholars were looking for similarities and influences between different writers, stating the unity of human nature and integrity of the world. Now, the opposite is true in many articles: let us not forget that comparative literature is the science of differences (“science des différences”). For this reason old fashioned Western canons which were mainly formed on the basis of the “great literature” (French, German, English, Italian, and Spanish) with too little attention devoted to the “small literature” cannot satisfy anyone. Such perception and presentation of world literature with one dominating center is unacceptable for many scholars who see this problem as being more complicated. Because in the practical interpretation of world literature its “center” is always changeable—every national literature from which every scholar (or reader) looks at other literatures of the world could occupy the place of the center. Thinking thus, the practical model of world literature becomes multicentered, and all literature beyond the boundaries of national literature can be characterized as peripheral or contextual.

Lithuanian comparative studies got caught up in entirely new practical and theoretical contexts of globalization, post-soviet emigration, and postmodernism, which questioned identity and emphasised differences. Nevertheless in Lithuania early twenty-first century conferences and works in the area of comparative studies embraced all possible prospects for renewal, including intertextuality, intermediality, reception, imagology, post-colonialism, regional research, and cultural studies with great optimism. New Centers for comparative studies emerged, followed by new publication series and even newly established departments at universities. The Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association (LCLA) was established in 2005 and in the same year became a member of the European Network of Comparative Literature. The members of LCLA published many valuable articles and books.⁵

Nijolė Kašeliionienė is among the authors who published the greatest number of publications in the field of comparative studies. Her research is devoted to the relations between Lithuanian and French literature and

⁵ Vytautas Kubilius’s collection of articles *Tautinė literatūra globalizacijos amžiuje* (2003), Gintarė Bernotienė’s monograph *Menų sąveikos ieškojimai: Judita Vaičiūnaitė ir Leonardas Gutauskas* (2005), Jūratė Baranova’s, *Filosofija ir literatūra: priešpriešos, paralelės, sankirtos* (2006), Reda Pabarčienė’s, *Kurianti priklausomybę. lyginamieji lietuvių dramos klasikos tyrinėjimai* (2010), Audinga Peluritytė’s, *Ribos architektonika: Šiuolaikinė lietuvių literatūra ir kontekstai* (2016) etc.

culture: Hugo's road to Lithuania, Putinas's contacts with Baudelaire, the reception of François Villon in Lithuania, and so on. Also she gave a broad introduction to contemporary French comparatist theory (Pierre Brunel, Yves Chevrel, Daniel-Henri Pageaux, Jean Bessière, Siegbert Salomon Prawer⁶). Kašėlionienė supports the idea of Jean Bessière that modern literature studies which recognise the phenomenon of methodological pluralism also acknowledge the importance of comparative literature. Since methodological pluralism dominates the field of research, it should no longer be referred to as a drawback of comparative literature: "Comparative studies is mostly the art of context creation" (Kašėlionienė 2013, 3-4).

New trends in studies from the United States and other countries reached Lithuanian universities through émigré scholars (Bronius Vaškėlis, Violeta Kelertienė, Milda Danytė, Birutė Ciplijauskaitė, and others). Scholars who returned to independent Lithuania, mostly from the United States, helped restore Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. This university's Literary Comparative Center was founded by Bronius Vaškėlis (2000), engaged in research and publishing activities, emphasizing the interdisciplinary dimension.

When speaking about new ideas in contemporary Lithuanian comparative studies, one should relate them to newly emerging research trends.

First, it is worth mentioning all the numerous works devoted to the theoretical renewal of comparative studies by relating them to the issues of post-colonialism, feminism, æsthetics of reception, intertextuality, imagology, New Historicism, and deconstruction that newly emerge in the process of expanding interdisciplinary or cultural literary research.⁷

The second major novelty is the renewal of the object of research, including the transition from the binary comparison of two authors which

⁶ Publications of Nijolė Kašėlionienė: *Komparatyvistikos pagrindai: mokomoji knyga filologijos studentams* (2006), *Komparatyvizmo aktualumas. Lietuvių—prancūzų literatūriniai ryšiai* (2010), *Literatūrinė komparatyvistika: pamatinės teorijos ir atsinaujinanti praktika* (2013).

⁷ Lithuanian comparative literature association published the series of books *Acta litteraria comparativa: Comparative Literature Today: Theory and Practice* (2000), *Comparative and Cultural Self-Actuality* (2004), *Interaction of Literary and other arts: Theoretical Comparative Problems* (2005), *Intercultural Interpretations* (2006), *Barbarian in European Literature and Culture* (2008), *Vilnius: Cultural and Literary Reflection* (2009), *European Landscape Transformations: Own and Other Meetings* (2010-2011), *Identity Search in Baltic literature* (2012-2013), *Letter in Literature and Culture* (2014-2015).

has already become a cliché, to contemporary comparative studies where the researcher is cast into an extremely wide sociocultural context. The previously dominant ethnocentric thought is being remodelled into open communication systems and various multicultural area studies. In the global world interactions between disciplines and cultures are inevitable, but for comparative research to be successful, it is necessary to include social, anthropological and historical data, to determine the most concrete place and time of these interactions, since they are never abstract or universal.

Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) was not only an insightful specialist of culture studies and Polish writer awarded the Nobel Prize, but also the most typical descendant of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania who grew up in Lithuania, on the estate of his parents by Kėdainiai and graduated from Vilnius University. He—as well as Adam Mickiewicz—could not imagine his cultural identity without either Poland or Lithuania. Feeling out of place in a poorly ethnocentric culture, he wrote the book *Native Realm* (*Rodzinna Europa*, 1959, Lithuanian translation in 2011) and created a multicultural and regional profile of “native Europe”. In the book, *Search for a Homeland* [*Szukanie ojczyzny*], he claimed: “It may be that some persons feel badly in ethnocentric cultures. Their usefulness might exactly manifest by designing the “connective tissue” where it seems impossible to reconcile national contradictions” (Miłosz 1995, 12). Miłosz proposed that the regional myth of the “Native Realm” is very important for purposes of daily life and might help the West to better learn about something that recently seemed so totally alien, “barbaric”, “unknown”, and “new” Europe.⁸

A breakthrough in comparative research from national to regional can be found in the book *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures* (2004-2006). It provides us with a postmodern deconstruction of various national literatures and a remodelling into the wider regional cultural model of East-Central Europe.

⁸ Identity of the “Native Realm” was described by Miłosz by a number of features: 1) it is a region of nations that historically was under constant threat by German and Russian military forces and national oppression, and acted as an “object of sale” in politics; 2) a writer had an especially high social status in them; 3) their literature focused on politics, moral metaphysical, and philosophical problems; 4) its works were influenced by the Western borrowings by originally reworking them beyond recognition; 5) the form of creating—the “lack of form”; 6) it is a region that experienced the evanescence of the Jews who use to reside there in great numbers; 7) and finally, these are the mostly intermixed languages and cultures that can understand each other the best (Miłosz and Fiut 2003, 369-382).

In this book, written by a large team of authors of various nationalities, the Lithuanian cultural paradigm is represented in articles by Violeta Kelertas, Tomas Venclova, Arturas Tereškinas and Audronė Girdzijauskaitė. The kind of stimulation of regional memory can be explained only through the peculiarities of consciousness of modern-day scholars who interpret literature. Would individual nations be willing to assign themselves to a general regional model of culture in addition to their ethnocentric one? As an answer to this question one could mention the book *Grotesque Revisited: Grotesque and Satire in the Post/Modern Literature of Central and Eastern Europe* (2013). Cultural and literary scholars of the Baltic region are taking a similar path. In recent years researchers at the Under Tuglas Literature Centre at the Estonian Academy of Science, the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art at the University of Latvia, and the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute have been organizing biannual conferences about the memory of the Soviet period that is common to all three Baltic countries and about the changes of their national identity in the global context, and have been publishing several joint publications which can be attributed to regional comparative research.

The prospect of comparative research of Baltic cultures can no longer be imagined without postcolonial ideological criticism and the cultural studies innovations broadly introduced in the books *Baltic Postcolonialism* (ed. Violeta Kelertas, 2006) and Laura Laurušaitė's *Between Nostalgia and Mimicry: Lithuanian and Latvian Emigrants Postwar Novels (Tarp nostalgijos ir mimikrijos: lietuvių ir latvių pokario išėvijos romanai,* 2015). Concentrating on the topic of national uniqueness that predominates in national literary narratives, and using new methodologies and values systems, much new regional and postcolonial research on cultural memory in the Baltic States is being conducted.

Prolonging the idea of Kazys Pakštas, professor and geographer of the interwar period, Silvestras Gaižiūnas established the Academy of Baltoskandia (1991-2009). The aim of this institution was to integrate Lithuanian culture to the common Baltic and Scandinavian region and develop relations between different literatures. He wrote the books *Baltic Faust and European Literature (Baltų Faustas ir Europos literatūra,* 2002) and *Scandinavian Literature and Baltic Contexts (Skandinavų literatūros ir baltiškieji kontekstai,* 2009).

Antanas Andrijauskas, head of the comparative studies department at the Institute of Culture, Philosophy and Art, distinguishes two main features of contemporary comparative studies—interdisciplinarity and pluralistic methodology. He has produced two series of publications, revising Western/Eastern Cultural Research in his comparative studies:

East-West: Comparative Studies and Bibliotheca Orientalia et Comparativa. He published books such as: *Comparative Vision: Eastern Aesthetics and Art Philosophy (Komparatyvistinė vizija: Rytų estetika ir meno filosofija, 2006)* and collective monograph *The Evolution of Lithuanian Euro-nationality: Challenges of the Present and Future (Lietuviškojo europietiško raišymo raida: dabarties ir ateities iššūkiai, 2006)*.

Critical interpretation of static ethnocentric national identity is developed in Leonidas Donskis's article "Globalisation and Identity: Personal Observations Regarding the Discourse on National Identity" ("Globalizacija ir tapatybė: asmeninės pastabos apie lietuviškuosius tapatybės diskursus", 2006) and in Nerija Putinaite's book *Exiles of the Athens of the North (Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai, 2004)*.

In addition to regional research, quite a number of works are devoted to imagology or image studies, for example, Violeta Kelertienė's articles "National image of the German in contemporary Soviet Lithuanian fiction", or "Vilnius in the literary imagination", Laura Laurušaitė's articles "Imagology as an instrument in (e)migration identity research" and "The East European syndrome in the modern (e)migration narrative".

Imagology raises significant issues of collective identity, functions of national stereotypes and the concept of the *Other*. Imagology studies are of an interdisciplinary nature. They are somewhere in between the history of literature, politics, and psychology. According to Kašeliionienė, having taken a closer approach to postcolonial attitudes, image studies become complex and open up a multicultural perspective. The researcher distances himself from questions such as "How do you see yourself?" and "How do you see the other?" and instead asks "How do you think the other sees you?", thus introducing the third image about the image that others have about us in addition to the auto-image and the hetero-image; this third image can be referred to as a "meta-image". This type of analysis prevails in Nijolė Kašeliionienė's book *The Image of Lithuania in French Literature (up to the Twentieth Century): the History of one Example of Barbarity (Lietuvos įvaizdis prancūzų literatūroje (iki XX amžiaus): vienos barbarybės istorija, 2011)*.

In a broader context, all over the world after the Cold War, a new geopolitical context formed, the European Union expanded, migration and globalization intensified. During these changes comparative studies appeared in the spotlight and have been rated as a relevant theory together with multiculturalism and post-colonialism. Charles Bernheimer criticized Welck's comparative literature theory based on literature's autonomy emphasizing literature's dependence on history and politics in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*. We can see that in

Lithuania this process was very similar. An *émigré* scholar, Milda Danytė, came from Canada to Lithuania after it regained its independence and started to work at Vytautas Magnus University. In 1999 she published the article, “Changing Directions in Comparative Literature”, in which she described the changes in North American comparative studies and made it clear that after the Second World War, American comparative studies, which expanded upon the integration of multicultural, regional and cultural studies, could give Lithuanian comparative studies more than the traditional French School of Comparative Studies, which studies the influence of one author on another.

But an increase in migration expanded multicultural empires and globalization (“Global English”) began to level off national differences, because “the cultural power of colonialism lives on in language” (Hutcheon 1995, 300). However, with time the optimism started dwindling away and comparative studies receive more and more criticism. So Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s question in her book, *Death of a Discipline* (2003), whether the discipline can survive the idea of world literature, suggests that comparativism should be modernized radically. Therefore, despite its remaining openness to theoretical debate, the biggest goal of modern Lithuanian comparative literature studies remains practical. That is, to continue participating in the European cultural dialogue and fostering the ethics of comparative studies, contributing to the studies carried out by the Baltic studies Centres in universities in Europe, aiming to resist the on-going process of globalization and to preserve the peculiarity of national culture. On the other hand, the need for comparative literature and its major disciplinary strength, as Linda Hutcheon (1995, 302) claimed, lie in cultural openness and in a positive version of what Emily Apter considers its “unhomely” quality and what Bernheimer calls its “quality of dispossession—a kind of haunting by otherness”. Comparative literature’s fate is to exist between two permanent and unavoidable national and global contradictions: “[t]he more mature the national literature becomes, the more it realizes that it is part of world literature” (Kubilius 1983, 5).

The work of literature is paradoxical itself, as it does not have a clear boundary between the artistic text and its historical context, and therefore it is impossible to say where one begins and where the other ends. So understanding a literary work is deeply paradoxical too—a literary text is strongly bound to the time and place of its writing and, in particular, to the national language, and yet at the same time it is free of them (it has immanent aesthetic value, which is spread through translation and interpretation). If we perceive contemporary culture as an increasingly paradoxical phenomenon, comparative studies, having survived its crises,

having denied its tradition and having acquired a variety of literary research forms will find a place in it.

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PART IV
Comparative Practices
and Perspectives

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SEARCH FOR A METHOD IN SLOVAK COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

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Comparative literary studies in Slovak literary studies have developed as a consequence of the need of Slovak literary historiography to see Slovak literature in relation with other literatures and by assimilating various external influences. In Slovak comparative study of literature, one can identify conceptional and methodological inspirations by German philosophy and philology in the nineteenth century and by Russian formalism and Czech structuralism (Prague Linguistic Circle) in the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, British and American cultural studies and world literature studies represent an important impetus and a challenge to Slovak comparative literary studies. However, Slovak comparative literary studies have gone their own way in many respects and reached their maturity especially in the works of Dionýz Ďurišin (1929-1997). It would certainly be an exaggeration to equate Slovak comparative literary studies with Ďurišin, but there is no doubt that a certain line of thinking culminated in his theories which were very influential in Slovakia as well as abroad. In this essay, I will sketch the search for method in Slovak comparative literary studies from its beginnings. I will point out the methodological shifts in the discipline and only secondarily focus on the achievements of the prominent scholars. Akin to other European traditions of comparative literature, the research method has gained different forms and meanings in different periods in the development of the discipline in Slovakia. I will try to show how its various forms and meanings from older periods remain inspirational or problematic up to the present.

1. The antecedents to comparative literary studies in Slovakia in the nineteenth century

The beginnings of the comparative study of literature are linked to the formation of European nations. The individualisation of literatures on the national principle was the starting point for their comparison. And indeed the notions of nation and of the national play an important role in the discourse of the discipline even today. It is the basis of its generally accepted definition as the study of literature across linguistic and national boundaries.

The birth of European nationalist movements and consequently of nation-states is seen as a political effect of the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century. The formation of national consciousness was a very complicated and painstaking process for the nations of the Kingdom of Hungary which itself was subordinate to Habsburg monarchs. The situation was particularly unfavourable for the Slovaks. Political, educational, and cultural institutions were controlled by the non-Slovak ruling class and it was not possible for the Slovak intelligentsia to draw on their own literary tradition which had just started to develop. They expressed themselves in Latin, German, Hungarian, or Czech—languages which were not considered foreign in the multi-ethnic territory. In the 1820s and 1830s, the question of Slovak as a national language was still unsolved. The Catholic national leaders such as Martin Hamuljak (1789-1859) and Ján Hollý (1785-1849) wrote in the so-called Bernolák language, the first attempt at a codification of Slovak by Anton Bernolák (1762-1813) in 1787, and the Protestant clergymen such as Pavel Josef Šafárik (1795-1861) and Ján Kollár (1793-1852) used biblical Czech in their works.

The driving force of the Slovak national awakening were actually writers. The ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), who claimed that language is the defining factor of a nation, were an important source of their inspiration. However, most of the Slovaks were farmers who could not offer them sufficient backing. The Slovak nobility was magyarized. The Slovak intelligentsia was educated in Hungarian or German. Aware of the increasing national oppression, the leading figures of the Slovak national awakening therefore searched for support in the older idea of Slavdom as did their colleagues in other Slavic nations. It was first of all Pavel Josef Šafárik who presented the Slavs as a cultural and linguistic unit in his monumental *History of Slavic Language and Literature According to all Dialects* (*Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und*

Literatur nach allen Mundarten, 1826). In the nineteenth century, this compendium of detailed information about Slavic languages and literatures served as the basic manual on the history of Slavic literatures and as a model for histories of Slavic literatures in other languages. One can see Šafárik's *Geschichte* in the context of other similar handbooks and encyclopædias which served as pre-histories of comparative literature in this period. Šafárik did not work with any theorized notion of comparison. The method he used was rather contrastive or juxtapositive than comparative.

Ján Kollár's *On the Literary Reciprocity among the Slav Tribes and Dialects* (*O literárnej vzájomnosti medzi kmeny a nářečmi slávskými*, 1836), written in Czech and published in German a year later, argued for a cultural unity of the Slavs. It is especially language and literature that unites the Slavs according to Kollár. However, Kollár's idea of literary reciprocity ("vzájomnosť") is not a result of an expert synthesis or a generalization. It is more intuitive than analytical. Interestingly, Kollár's conception tried to integrate the Slavs into a cultural unity at a time when the Slav literary communities tried to differentiate themselves. The idea of Slav literary reciprocity created the basis for later Pan-Slavism which affected Slovak literary scholarship well into the twentieth century.

Šafárik's literary historical and Kollár's programmatic work on Slav literary reciprocity were important stimuli for Ľudovít Štúr (1815-1856), who created and propagated the Slovak language standard which led to the contemporary Slovak literary language. For the history of Slovak comparative literary studies, his treatise *On National Songs and Myths of Slavic Stocks* (*O národných písních a pověstech plemen slovanských*, 1853) is of special importance. Štúr substantiated Kollár's idea of Slav literary reciprocity by literary analysis of folk poetry. His research resulted in generalizations about Slavic folk poetry and myths, about their nature and function vis-à-vis artistic poetry of Slavic nations. Methodologically, Štúr drew on the mythological school as it was formulated in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's seminal *German Mythology* (*Deutsche Mythologie*, 1835).

2. The beginnings of comparative literary studies in Slovakia

After the unsuccessful revolution of 1848/1849, in which Slovaks rose against Hungarian rule, literary life in Upper Hungary, as was then known the territory which now forms Slovakia, was in deep crisis. Literary studies concentrated on the development of Slovak literature without

paying much attention to the relations with other literatures. A new epoch of comparative study was ushered in by Jaroslav Vlček's (1860-1930) *History of Slovak Literature (Dejiny literatúry slovenskej, 1890)* which created a compact view of the development of Slovak literature and enabled comparison with other literatures. Several comparative studies appeared in the following years. The studies of Pavel Bujnák (1882-1933) excel in this regard. Whereas one can speak of comparative tendencies in the studies of other authors, Bujnák's works are comparative in the true sense of the word. He explored foreign influences on Slovak literature and searched for analogies with methods current in the then European comparative literary studies. He is also the author of the first book-length comparative study, *János Arany in Slovak Literature (Ján Arany v literatúre slovenskej, 1924)*, which was his habilitation thesis submitted at the Charles University in Prague.

External factors played a significant role in the development of Slovak literary studies in the inter-war period. Comenius University, the first modern Slovak university, was founded in Bratislava in 1919. In the beginning, the teachers of literary theory and history were mostly Czech professors. Some of them were also interested in comparative literary studies. Slovak comparative literary studies were, therefore, influenced by methods used in the then more developed Czech comparative studies. One group of scholars subscribed to positivism and another one drew on the works of the founder of Russian comparative literary studies, Alexander Veselovsky (1838-1906). The former, represented mainly by Albert Pražák (1880-1956), was interested in the detailed description of relations and influences between Slovak literature and other literatures (such as Czech and Hungarian); the latter, personified by Frank Wollman (1888-1969), focused on the developmental continuity of national literatures and aimed at a supranational literary synthesis mainly in the sense of the reciprocity ("vzájomnosť") of Slavic literatures.

The formation of a new generation of Slovak literary scholars coupled with the intellectual fermentation of the time brought about a significant opposition to the methodological programme of literary studies. In the 1930s and 1940s, a significant role was played by the Association for Scientific Synthesis (*Spolok pre vedeckú syntézu*), a group of young graduates such as literary scholar Mikuláš Bakoš (1914-1972) and philosopher Igor Hrušovský (1907-1978), who became interested in new theoretical and methodological initiatives in European science, especially in literary studies, linguistics, philosophy, and ethnology. The members of the association aimed at creating a model of science applicable to various disciplines. They were inspired by the philosophy of the Vienna circle and

the burgeoning structuralism. They were interested predominantly in methodology and disapproved of all unprincipled research, including the search for influences prevalent in comparative literary studies. Their approach can be characterized as scientific. However, although this theoretical initiative shaped literary studies in Slovakia in this period, they were not yet visible in comparative literary studies themselves. Comparative studies mostly continued in the positivist spirit as evidenced, for example, by Rudo Brtáň's monograph *Pushkin in Slovak Literature (Puškin v slovenskej literatúre, 1947)*.

The increasing awareness of the development of Slovak literature as well as the emergence of a unique structuralist methodology eventually prompted a new attempt at formulating a comparative research programme focusing on the relations of Slovak literature with especially Czech and Hungarian literatures. Mikuláš Bakoš and Karol Rosenbaum (1920-2001) started arguing for the study of interliterary relations based on a structuralist approach to literary phenomena and the literary development of national literature and not on the search for influences. The political dogmatism of the 1950s was generally unfavourable to the comparative study of literature which relapsed into positivism and historicism and focused primarily on Slovak-Russian and Slovak-Ukrainian relations. Comparative literary studies were labelled as "bourgeois cosmopolitanism" and "kowtowing to the West" (see Gálik 1996, 104). However, these descriptive studies created the conditions for the study of Slovak literature in relation with other literatures, and for the later development of the theory of comparative literature by Dionýz Ďurišin.

3. Dionýz Ďurišin's unique theory of interliterary process

The foundation of the Institute of World Literature and Languages at the Slovak Academy of Sciences (*Ústav svetovej literatúry a jazykov SAV*) in 1964 created the first institutional platform for comparative literary studies in the country. The name of the institute as well as Milan Pišút's (1908-1984) extraordinary editorial initiative, *History of World Literature (Dejiny svetovej literatúry, 1963)*, reflected a growing interest in world literature at that time. The notion of world literature became the subject matter of a meticulous theory three decades later.

Dionýz Ďurišin, who was a student of Mikuláš Bakoš and was associated with the Institute of World Literature and Languages, belonged to the generation of scholars trained after World War Two. Apart from structuralism, which was resurrected after the relaxation of political

dogmatism in the 1960s, the reigning historicism of Slovak comparative literary studies in the 1950s and 1960s had a profound impact on Ďurišin's conception of the discipline. His approach is both literary and historical. He understood the concept of comparative literature itself historically, *i.e.* as a concept that originated at a particular stage in the development of literary consciousness, more precisely, at the time of the formation of national literatures and, as a consequence, of the need for research into their mutual relations as well as of the need for generalization. He rejected the concept of comparative literature as comparatism. In his opinion, the hotly debated terms *littérature générale* and *littérature comparée* were merely products of a stage in the development of thinking about literature. The term "comparative literature" expressed for him the basic idea of exploring interliterary connections and relationships only if understood historically. It was a term with only a relative designation power. The absence of a better term, argued Ďurišin (1979, 139-141), often leads to this dualism and to the absolutization of the meaning of the term "comparative". Ďurišin especially opposed the positivist influence research ("vplyvológia"), which was a frequent subject of his criticism. He stressed the importance of the receiver. To him, reception was a creative process. The rejection of the concept of influence is undoubtedly one of the key concepts of Slovak comparative literary studies, which developed independently of German reception theory approximately at the same time.

The beginning of Ďurišin's academic career coincides with the onset of the crisis of comparative literature announced by René Wellek at the 2nd Congress of the International Association of Comparative Literature in Chapel Hill in 1958. Ďurišin was aware of the crisis of Western comparative literature. In 1979 (142), he wrote:

In contrast to the so-called crisis of comparative literary studies, which is discussed in numerous articles and books of West European and American comparatists, the perspective of comparative research is clear in the socialist countries. It is underpinned by planned literary historical work as well as the study of interliterary relations that lead to the final literary synthesis of the global developmental process.

Russian literary studies significantly informed Ďurišin's theory. Alexander Veselovsky's concept of historical poetics, that demanded "clarification of the essence of poetry from its history", was for him the basis and the core of interliterary research. Viktor Zhirmunsky provided another important impetus for the development of Ďurišin's thoughts mainly by his systematic distinction between genetic contacts and typological analogies

that are independent of contacts. Interliterariness is the key concept Ďurišín developed. Drawing on the formalist idea of literariness, he defined interliterariness as the development of literature transcending national literature (for a detailed treatment of the concept in English, see Gálik 2000). Ďurišín formulated his views and an original theory of comparative literature in *Problems of Comparative Literature (Problémy literárnej komparatistiky, 1967)*—whose German edition, *Vergleichende Literaturforschung. Versuch eines methodisch-theoretischen Grundrisses (1972)*, was very well received by German comparative scholars (see Gáfrík 2012)—, and especially in *Theory of Comparative Literature (Teória literárnej komparatistiky, 1975)*. Ďurišín was eager to propagate his theory in other languages. In English, he published *Sources and Systematics of Comparative Literature (1974)* and *Theory of Literary Comparatistics (1984)*.

Ďurišín envisioned a methodology that started with historical poetics and proceeded with genre studies, which he interpreted as a diachronic phenomenon that revealed the continuity of literary development from the historical perspective. This presupposes a synchronic analysis that focuses on the big literary epochs and styles. The synchronic aspect forms the criterion for the historical periodization of the development of world literature.

In the mid-1980s, Ďurišín started revising his theory of “comparatistics”, as he sometimes called the discipline in English. He definitely rejected the concept of comparative literature and worked on “the theory of interliterary process” (see Ďurišín 1987 and 1989). In this way the notion of world literature came into the forefront of his theoretical thinking. Ďurišín understood world literature as a dynamic system with individual works, literatures etc. as elements which interact with one another in various ways. These relationships form the content of the term interliterariness. World literature is the highest unit, the final category of the developmental movement of literature, *i.e.* the association with this category of literary phenomena determines the ability to enter into relations with the other elements of the system. World literature is thus a mental construction which is dynamic and ever-changing. Ďurišín was particularly committed to the definition of the categories of the literary-historical process. He distinguished between the national-literary and the interliterary process. The units of the national literary process include the literature of city-states (*polis*), ethnic medieval literature, national literature and modern national literature. The units of the interliterary process are multinational literature, the interliterary community (specific or standard), interliterary centrism and the final category of the literary

process, which is world literature. Remarkable was Ďurišin's international project, in which almost sixty scholars mostly from Central and Eastern Europe participated. Its results were published in six volumes under the title *Special Interliterary Communities (Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá, 1987-1993)*. Ďurišin expounded his theory of interliterary process in the Slovak-French monograph *Teória medziliterárneho procesu I/Théorie du processus interlittéraire I (1995)*.

4. Debating Ďurišin's legacy

Ďurišin won a considerable acclaim in Slovakia as well as abroad, although at present he does not explicitly feature in any significant way in the discourse in the West (see Domínguez 2012 for an exception). For example, Douwe Fokkema used elements of Ďurišin's theory in one period of his career in comparative literature. So did William Tay and other Chinese literary scholars. Ďurišin's collaboration with the Italian scholar Armando Gnisci and his team was also productive. Eva Kushner, Tania Franco Carvalhal, Claudio Guillén, Zoran Konstantinović and others also appreciated Ďurišin's work (Gálik 2009).

Probably nothing expresses the impact of Ďurišin's views better than the claim of the Dutch scholar Pierre Swiggers in 1982 (182) that a fundamental change informed by Ďurišin's work was taking place in the methodology of comparative literary studies. It seemed to him that the old paradigm was going to be replaced by a new model which "owes much of its existence and of its epistemological structure to the scientific research program sketched in D. Durisin's work." "Durisin", argued Swiggers, "has been the first to offer a systematic typology of literary relations (or metatextual relations)".

The cultural turn which started in the 1980s caused an unfavourable change to studies focused on literariness. Although Ďurišin's theory did share some Marxist presuppositions of cultural studies (such as the base-superstructure model), the focus on the development of literature, on the literary process, was not reconcilable with the new concept of text. The two approaches thus also differ fundamentally about the object of the study of literature: for Ďurišin it was literariness; for the proponents of the cultural turn it is culture, *i.e.* something that goes far beyond literature itself (see Gáfrik 2010). However, the notion of culture starts occurring in Ďurišin's last works alongside his own concepts and categories of interliterariness (see Suwara 2003).

In 2000, an international conference was held in the Slovak town of Budmerice. It marks an important turning point in Slovak comparative

literary studies. The proceedings—*Koncepcie svetovej literatúry v epoche globalizácie/Concepts of World Literature in the Age of Globalization*—were published three years later. The conference was planned by Dionýz Ďurišín together with his Italian colleague Armando Gnisci. This project should have shown the viability of Ďurišín's concept of world literature, which he formulated in his book *What is World Literature? (Čo je svetová literatúra, 1992)*. However, Ďurišín died in 1997. The proceedings were published by his colleagues Pavol Koprda and Ján Koška (2003, 10), who were forced to state in the introduction: "In fact, each of the papers is anchored fairly independently and some do not even have the ambition to take a position on the concept of world literature".

With Ďurišín's death, the research model initiated by him lost momentum, although there have been several scholars who have drawn on his legacy (for example, Pavol Koprda, Ján Koška, Marián Gálik, and Ladislav Franek). Others tried to formulate their own comparative approaches or started adopting new approaches from British and American literary studies. Mária Bátorová (2004), for example, was inspired by the anthropological turn in literary studies, and created her own method of contextualization. Bátorová argues that her method focuses on authors and their works, whereas Ďurišín's approach is concerned with macro-structures. After a thematic analysis of a literary work, she proposes to contextualize it by means of typological relations with works and other literary phenomena in world literature. She used the method in her monographs *J. C. Hronský and Modernism (J. C. Hronský a moderna, 2000, published in German as Jozef Cíger Hronský und die Moderne, 2004)*, *Paradoxes of Pavol Strauss (Paradoxy Pavla Straussa, 2006)* and *Dominik Tatarka—the Slovak Don Quixote (Dominik Tatarka—slovenský Don Quijote, 2014, published in English in 2016)*.

The new generation of scholars started re-evaluating Ďurišín's theory. Ďurišín was critical of eurocentrism in comparative literary studies. He tried to include literatures from all over the world in his theoretical model, which was supposed to be a universal theory, a theory of world literature. However, a comparison of the world's literary critical traditions as the one proposed by Earl Miner in *Comparative Poetics* (1990) puts such a universalist claim in doubt. Miner argued that in every culture there is a "foundational" or "originative" poetics with explicit poetics that come into existence when critics define the nature and the conditions of literature in terms of the main literary genres. He saw western literature based on drama because Aristotle had chosen this genre as the starting point of his theory of literature. The result is that the western literary critical tradition focuses on mimesis. The eastern literary critical traditions (such as the

Chinese, the Arabic, the Indian), however, are based on the lyric and are “affective-expressive”. Literariness is a term firmly rooted in the mimetic Western thinking about literature. Therefore, although Ďurišin tried to overcome eurocentrism, his theory of literature is—seen from this perspective—still eurocentric (see Gáfrík 2009).

At present, the consensus in the comparatist community seems to be that Ďurišin’s systemic approach to the development of world literary history is admirable, but that it remains unfinished in practice. Nonetheless, several of his concepts, such as “interliterariness” and “interliterary community”, are alive even independently of his systematics. Ďurišin’s theory seems to oscillate between the two poles—an outdated world view and contemporary relevance:

Ďurišin’s concept of interliterary process was in line with Marxist-Leninist philosophy (as practised in the former Communist Bloc countries) which, in the end, anticipated the abolishment of national borders and the creation of a general communist “paradise”. The fact that Ďurišin elaborated it in several others of his works made it central for his thought, and, despite his frequent ideological framing, paradoxically modern in the light of contemporary trends towards regional and area literary studies. It suited the post-World War II communist world and it also suits the contemporary world displaying tendencies towards transnational and transcultural spaces better than the concepts emerging from and addressing a world consisting of culturally and ideologically separated wholes. (Pokrivčák 2013)

But what remains of Ďurišin’s theory in the present practice of the discipline? Reception studies are definitely one of the areas of literary research which owe much to Ďurišin’s theory. They take the shape of history of translation in Slovakia. Ďurišin defined translation as “one of the important manifestations of interliterary coexistence”, whose primary function is “to cater for the closest ties between the national literature and the other national literary development and ensure the inner confrontation of literary values of two or more developmental series of national literatures” (1975, 145). As Libuša Vajdová (2014, 90) points out, Ďurišin introduced the notion of selection in the translation process, *i.e.* the works to be translated are “selected” by the culture into which the translation enters. Two important factors which initiate the translation and its form come into play: the developmental need and the activity of the receiving culture. Literary translation becomes a part of the literary history of the language in which the original is translated and in this way takes part in the interliterary process (*ibid.*, 91).

In the past thirty years, many studies focused on the history of translation have appeared. They concern Italian literature (Pavol Koprda), Croatian literature (Ján Jankovič), Rumanian literature (Libuša Vajdová), Hungarian literature (Karol Tomiš), Russian literature (Ema Panovová, Mária Kusá, and others), Macedonian literature (Zvonko Taneski), Nordic literatures (Milan Žitný), and others. These studies describe the political, cultural and literary determinants of translation as well as its informative, creative, and cultural function in Slovak culture. They enjoy a wide popularity among Slovak comparatists. They represent the most prominent legacy of Ďurišin's theory in Slovak comparative literature and translation studies.

5. A new wind in the new millennium

The Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (which was re-established in 1991 after it had merged into the Institute for Literary Studies in 1973 because of a political decision) has been the main center of comparative literary studies in Slovakia since its inception. In 2011, another center of comparative literature in the form of the Department of Dionýz Ďurišin at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava was founded. It is led by Mária Bátorová. In addition, comparative literature is taught at the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, where, thanks to the effort of Pavol Koprda, there is an accredited doctoral program in interliterariness.

In 2007, there was a significant change of leadership at the Institute of World Literature SAS, as its director Ján Koška, who died after a severe illness in 2006, was replaced by Adam Bžoch. The new director founded a Department of Comparative Literary Studies. The very name of the newly established department suggested a departure from the concept of Ďurišin's theory of interliterariness and a return to the concept of comparative literature.

Czech comparatist Miloš Zelenka (2015, 17) said that Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies had fallen into a crisis after Ďurišin's death and after the subsequent loss of contacts with the international community. He described the development of recent years as a "second wind". However, it is difficult to define this change because comparative literary studies are a significantly underdeveloped field of study in Slovakia. There is no study programme in comparative literature. It is offered as a one-semester course at very few universities and is taught only by a handful of scholars (most of them actually do not even teach the

discipline as their main interest). Until recently, there was also no common institutional framework for those interested in the discipline.

Nevertheless, the last ten years definitely meant a departure from the past, a reorientation, and an upsurge of activities. Slovak comparative literary studies have again tried to find a connection to the international community by focusing on the topics and problems discussed in the so-called international literary studies although there are also scholars who still derive their understanding of comparative literature from Ďurišin. The recent development brought about a break with structuralist literary history in favour of a rather vaguely defined literature-based approach to cultural studies. The adoption of new theories from abroad and the loss of the methodological unity in Slovak comparative literary studies has inevitably created a sense of identity crisis. Some representatives of the older generation see it as a lamentable destruction of their own tradition. Pavol Koprda (2010, 296), for example, argues that by accepting cultural and post-colonial studies, “we destroy the only model of literary research in central and eastern Europe, which is not slavishly western or nationalistic”. Pavol Koprda offered his own interpretation of interliterariness in the two-volume anthology of comparative literature *Theories of Interliterariness of the Twentieth Century (Teórie medziliterárnosti 20. storočia, 2009-2010)*, which are part of his monumental nine-volume book series *The Interliterary Process (Medziliterárny proces, 1999-2010)*.

In 2009, under the auspices of ICLA Research Committee on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Libuša Vajdová organized an international conference which marked a significant change in comparative studies at the institute. The conference proceedings were published under the title “*New Imagined Communities*”. *Identity Making in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe* (2010). Slovak scholars started drawing further inspiration from the current discourse in international literary studies. In 2014, for example, Dobrota Pucherová and myself organized the international conference *Postcolonialism and East-Central European Literatures*. The conference became the basis for the edited volume *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (2015).

The new tendency also appeared in the *World Literature Studies* journal, published by the Institute of World Literature SAS. Beside, or instead of, the questions of interliterariness and historical poetics, the problems of cultural identity and cultural history have increasingly attracted the attention of Slovak scholars. They started engaging with new research topics which address relevant social and cultural issues. These

issues also connect the researchers in Slovakia with researchers from abroad.

The interest in the region of Central and Eastern Europe has proved an important source of international cooperation and new research topics. Central Europe has been the focus of scholars of Slovak literature since the nineteenth century. Even Ďurišín imagined “a specific interliterary community of socialist literatures” whose main focus was Central and Eastern Europe. The region is no doubt of big interest to Slovak scholars because of geographical proximity and shared history. However, Slovak scholars also work on topics which go beyond this region and beyond European literatures. For example, already in the 1960s and 1970s, Slovak orientalist such as Marián Gálik, Xénia Celnarová, and Ján Múčka started applying Ďurišín’s theory to Chinese, Turkish, and Vietnamese literatures respectively; at present, Dobrota Pucherová, for example, studies African Anglophone literature from a post-colonial perspective.

The focus on Central and Eastern Europe is also apparent from the recent thematic issues of *World Literature Studies*. These issues are sometimes coedited by colleagues from other institutes or other countries: see *The Contemporary Central European Novel* (2/2014), edited in Slovak by Judit Görözdi; *Transcultural Icons of East-Central Europe* (4/2016), edited in German and English by Matteo Colombi, Christine Gölz, Beáta Hock, and Stephan Krause from *Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa* (GWZO); *The Magic Realism in the Literatures of Central Europe* (2/2016), edited in Slovak by Judit Görözdi and Radoslav Passia; *Johan Huizinga and Central/East-Central Europe* (1/2017), edited in English and German by Adam Bžoch and *Frontier Orientalism in Central and East-European Literatures* (1/2018), edited in English by Charles Sabatos and Róbert Gáfrik.

The establishment of the Czech and Slovak Association of Comparative Literature in 2014 can be seen as the culmination of the efforts to revive Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies. The title of the first meeting *Contemporary Czech and Slovak Comparative Literature* which took place in Bratislava in 2015 did not suggest any specific research topic but a look into the conference programme reveals that the interest in the theory and methodology of comparative studies as well as the region of Central and Eastern Europe is the focus of the research activities of Slovak and Czech comparatists. However, the methodological unity that was given by Dionýz Ďurišín to Slovak comparative literary studies has disappeared. In the foreword to the proceedings *Comparative Literary Studies in Context (Literárna*

komparatistika v súvislostiach, 2016) from another comparative literature conference, the editor Dušan Teplan was compelled to admit:

Comparative literary studies are multifarious nowadays. When looking at the multitude of approaches, methods, theories, and conceptions, they may seem to have fallen into an uncontrolled swirl. [...] It may sound banal but in this intellectual endeavour which one must see as something more than an account of similarities and dissimilarities. The significance of comparison lies in unveiling the whole, and thus the connections which give the things the basic meaning.

Slovak comparative literary studies are more pluralistic nowadays than they were before (although not apparent from my overview, they did display some plurality even in the second half of the twentieth century). One probably cannot speak—as some used to in Slovakia as well as abroad—of the Slovak school of literary comparative studies any more. The new generation of comparatists, sometimes unaware of the Slovak tradition or rejecting it for various reasons, has gone new ways. Many times they search for methodological models or theories in Anglophone literary studies.

6. The present challenges to comparative literary studies in Slovakia

Although, even today, Slovak comparative literary studies are associated with the term “world literature”—the main journal and the main center of comparative literary studies in the country have the term in their names—, they do not comply with any particular conception of world literature. The term rather refers to the most general definition of world literature as the literature written in the various languages of the world.

A new concept of world literature has recently been propagated by some American and now also European scholars. Coupled with the increasing globalization which has made some scholars speak of “global literary studies” or “international literary studies”, this new concept of world literature represents a major challenge to Slovak comparative literary studies. Literary scholars all over the world are under pressure by their institutions to make their research international. The language medium through which it is to be realized is English. The proponents of international literary studies and of the new concept of world literature argue that the field is open to all national literatures and languages, but the hegemony of global English—which is a fact that may be denied in theory

but is undeniable in practice—makes such claims very problematic. Disadvantaged are chiefly the so-called small literatures—European and non-European alike—, because English is the language through which literary texts are supposed to enter the world of global literature and in which the scholars are to communicate their research. The invitation to participate is inclusive. However, the context of the debate is Anglophone. Some scholars see it as an opportunity to promote some authors from their national literature worldwide, while others oppose the project of world literature and see its inherent limitations.

American comparatist Dorothy Figueira (2012, 9) writes that the new concept of world literature “actually traces its origin back to English Departments and the revision of the American Literature canon in the 1980’s”. She sees it as another pedagogy of alterity (see Figueira 2008) which should appropriate the Other in an easily digestible way for American students and academia:

Like multiculturalism and postcolonialism, now World Literature can step in and co-opt Comparative Literature without having to do its onerous legwork. For all its talk of centrifugal and centripetal spheres of influence, World Literature is nothing more than the next generation of a consumerist pedagogy for managing the other in a monolingual context by the First World scholars and their native informants. (Figueira 2012, 16)

Slovak comparative literary studies have always had a strong sense of historical and evolutionary consciousness which seems to be lacking in the new concept of world literature. They have also stressed the need for the intimate knowledge of the studied literatures and of the languages in which they are written. Even Ďurišin’s concept of world literature presupposes them. In a letter to Miloš Zelenka (2002, 118), René Wellek reacted to Ďurišin’s book *What is World literature? (Čo je svetová literatúra?*, 1992), pointing out exactly this problem:

I did receive the book of Ďurišin, which, on the whole, I agree with wholeheartedly. I would only feel that Ďurišin is too optimistic when he believes that the comparative view can be extended in practice to Oriental and finally to any kind of literature. I agree with him in theory, but assure him that in American conditions, asking for an excellent knowledge of French and German is a realizable ideal, while Oriental languages could be asked only of recent immigrants and certainly natives of that country.

One can argue that the common communication space which global English creates for the world’s community of literary scholars may also

create conditions for the implementation of the world literature project. In his books, Ďurišin already discussed many issues which such a project entails. Is it possible that his utopian idea of world literary history is being reinvented by the global community of literary scholars? César Domínguez (2012, 106) writes in this regard:

Both Ďurišin's theory and the US (re)emergence of a systems approach share what I call a "discipline dissatisfaction" over the lack of methods for comprehensively surveying the wealth of disparate literary relations pertaining to "world literature".

Be it as it may, at a time when the concept of world literature has taken over the international community of comparative literary scholars, Slovak comparatists do not seem to be interested in reviving the world literature project. World literature has apparently become for many only an intuitive concept. They do not see it anything more than the final category of the literary process Ďurišin envisioned. Nor does the new concept of world literature seem appealing enough. However, the line of thinking initiated by Frank Wollman and Mikuláš Bakoš and fully developed by Dionýz Ďurišin has left a deep trace in Slovak comparative literary studies. The dialogue between this theoretical legacy and the new developments in the discipline globally are therefore very likely to continue.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**COMPARATIVE LITERATURE –
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OR/AND
INTELLECTUAL *MODUS VIVENDI*:
FROM A MACEDONIAN STANDPOINT**

SONJA STOJMENSKA-ELZESER

Introduction

Talking about a national school of comparative literature is *contradictio in adjecto*. Narrowing the field of comparative literature to a national framework unambiguously contradicts its very nature, since one of the key features identified in comparative literature is the subnational literary and cultural study. However, it is quite obvious that within the national cultural framework there are groups of scholars who share the same *habitus* of professional devotion to comparative literature as the sub-discipline of their teaching and academic research activities. Consequently, their profile is greatly defined by national context. The academic tradition of instituted comparative literature studies in the Republic of Macedonia began when the country was part of the Yugoslav Federation (SFRJ). This initially allowed a close collaboration with other university centers in the country, such as Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Zagreb, and other cities. The Department of General and Comparative Literature at the Blaze Koneski Faculty of Philology of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje was established in the academic year of 1980/81, preceding the 1982 foundation of the Department of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the Institute of Macedonian Literature within the same State University. A few years later, the Department of Macedonian and Balkan Literary and Historical Relations was also established. Comparative literature scholars have been members of the Comparative Literature Association of Macedonia since 1987, an Association which joined AILC/ICLA (International Comparative

Literature Association) in 2003 and REELC/ENCLS (European Network for Comparative Literary Studies) in 2005 at first constitutive conference held in Florence. Since its independence (1991), there have been several generations of intellectuals (graduates from comparative literature studies) fully engaged in the cultural and social spheres of public life in the Republic of Macedonia.

1. The shifting of methodological approaches

For the last forty years, Macedonian comparatists have been involved in a variety of literary research projects and have investigated a broad range of topics, facing whatever new challenges comparative and cultural studies brought. The shifting in comparative methodological approaches is evident. The dominance of positivist research in the reception of foreign literatures and the influence of particular authors developed into a strong wave of imagological studies, traductological and intersemiotic research, and into the recent amalgam of comparative literature with cultural studies including postcolonial paradigm, gender studies, popular culture and media studies, etc.

The beginnings of the institutionalization of comparative literature studies in Macedonia were closely related to a particular event that took place in 1981 and to the person who organized it. The occasion was a Colloquium of ICLA held in Ohrid on August 20th-25th, 1981. Thirty-two leading comparative literary critics and scholars took part in the conference, including René Wellek, Douwe Fokkema, Claudio Guillén, Yves Chevrel, Henry H. Remak, Ulrich Weisstein, Eva Kushner, Zoran Konstantinović, etc. The proceedings of the Colloquium were published in 1984, under the title *Literary Science in the World*. The organizer of this gathering, Milan Gjurcinov, was the founder of the Department of Comparative Literature and a member of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MASA). He consequently became a prominent figure in comparative studies in Macedonia.

Gjurcinov is a notable literary critic who has been writing extensively on the developments of Macedonian literature from a comparative point of view. His early comparative studies deal with the Slavic influence on Macedonian literature, especially the impact of Russian writers, such as Chekhov or Dostoevsky. He managed to establish close relations with many eminent literary critics and scholars who had visited the Department in Skopje or had taken part in conferences home and abroad. Students were able to attend lectures of eminent visiting professors, including Zoran Konstantinović from Innsbruck, the leading Slovak literary comparatist

Dionýz Ďurišin, Milivoj Solar and Vladimir Biti from Croatia, Radoslav Josimović and Novica Petković from Serbia, the Polish Tadeusz Michka and Leh Miodinski and many more. Over the following years Gjurginov (1998; 2008) has firmly supported and promoted the need for an axiological foundation of comparative studies.

The early works of Macedonian comparative scholars record information on the translation of foreign literature into Macedonian. Many studies were conducted on the reception of a particular national literature in Macedonia (see Gjurginova 2001; Mojsieva-Gusheva 2002). The general intention of the research was not only translation, but also the inclusion of Macedonian literature in global stylistic developments and poetics, especially by implementing modernistic approaches and methods within the Macedonian literary tradition. This was a direct result of the improved communication with writers from other European literary backgrounds.

Vlada Uroshević is another leading figure in comparative literature studies with special interest in the French avant-garde and Surrealism. Uroshević is also a poet, a novelist, a short-story writer, a member of MASA, a corresponding member of the *Académie Mallarmé* in Paris, and a member of the European Literary Academy in Luxembourg. His research interests moreover include Gothic fiction and fantastic literature (Uroshević 1988; Kapushevska-Drakulevska 1998). The impulses of Symbolism and Surrealism, originated in French literature, had a great impact on the development of Macedonian Modernism. They became an object of study in our university not only through the explorations of Uroshević (1993), but also through the work of other scholars, such as Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska (2001, 2003 and 2017).

The classical model of comparative research concerning the motifs of ancient literature and their transfer into contemporary culture based on the myth criticism has found supporters among few Macedonian comparative scholars (Uroshević 1993; Bojadzevska 1999). A considerable contribution to this field of study were the “Biennial Conference[s] of the Comparative Literature Association of Macedonia”. The conference sessions covered a wide variety of topics: *Metamorphoses and Meta-texts* (edited by Tomovska and Martinovski, 2008), *Odysseys about the Odyssey* (edited by Tomovska and Martinovski, 2010), *All the Faces of Humour: from Antiquity to Present* (edited by Tomovska and Martinovski, 2013), etc.

It is evident that even in their early works, which may be traced back to the 1980s, Macedonian comparatists have acknowledged the boundaries of the concept of “literary influence”. At the same time, this concept

enabled them to unfold new cultural histories by studying mutual impulses, contacts, and insights. The project that led to a shift from the positivist approach to more sophisticated research methods in literature was run by Gjurginov. He was also the editor of the proceedings that were published by MASA during the 1990s under the title *Comparative Research of Macedonian Literature and Art in the Twentieth Century*. The project addressed the following four subtopics: *Macedonian Literature and Art in the Context of the Poetics of Social Realism* (edited by Gjurginov and Todorova 1984); *Foreign Influences in Macedonian Literature and Art in the 1950s and 1960s* (edited by Gjurginov and Petkovski 1996); *Macedonian Literature and Culture in the Context of Mediterranean Cultural Sphere* (edited by Gjurginov, Petkovski and Sheleva 1998) and *Folklore Impulses in Macedonian Literature and Art in the Twentieth Century* (edited by Gjurginov, Petkovski and Sazdov 1998). This project was one of the most significant contributions in the field of comparative literature in Macedonia, not only due to the fact that a great number of Macedonian comparatists partook in this study, but also that these scholars provided a reassessment of methodological approaches, *i.e.* they problematized the concept of influence and impulses by drawing on multiple contexts (poetical, historical or cultural) to examine the nature of literary phenomena. This project marked the beginning of a new chapter in the development of comparative literature studies in Macedonia.

As the Slovak literary comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin specified in his work (which was widely accepted in Macedonian comparative literature studies), the contextualization with geo-cultural regions or with inter-literal communities proved to be the most efficient comparative method of analysis of Macedonian literature and culture. In this way, Macedonian comparative literature studies developed into series of surveys and analyses that thoroughly explored the Balkan cultural context and the Balkan intercultural phenomenon (see Prokopiev 2000; Sheleva 2006; Mojsieva-Gusheva 2008; Kulavkova 2008; Gjurginova 2011; Srbinovska 2012). A number of comparative studies were conducted in the field of Slavistics (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 2005 and Avramovska 2013) with special emphasis on South-Slavic and Yugoslav contexts. These neighbouring cultures constituted the official context of Macedonian society from 1944 to 1991 (see Gjurginov 2008; Mojsieva-Gusheva 2002 and 2008). There is also a number of studies that analyse Macedonian literature within the context of Mediterranean literary tradition (see Gjurginova 2006 and 2013). Furthermore, over the last decade the most common studies and conferences have been focusing on the delicate position of Macedonian literature within the European cultural context

(see Gjurginov 2003; Stojmenska-Elzeser 2009 and 2012). The name of the earliest journal of comparative literature, *Context*, published in both English and Macedonian by the Institute of Macedonian Literature, confirms this tendency. The first seven issues of this journal were published under the title *Literary Context* with the subtitle “Comparative Literature Studies” whereas from its eighth issue (2010) until the present day the subtitle for *Context* has been “Review for Comparative Literature and Cultural Research.” The renaming of the journal is an important indicator of the gradual change of Macedonian comparative literature studies into comparative cultural studies. Macedonian comparatists may also publish their works in the electronic journal *Mirage* established in 2002.¹ This e-journal has published over thirty issues so far. Another journal in the field of comparative Slavistics is *Philological Studies*², also launched in 2002 by several different academic centers: Skopje (Macedonia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Perm (Russia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Belgrade (Serbia).

Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogue as a cultural nucleus is one of the most common subjects of analysis in Macedonian comparative literature studies. For decades, Bakhtin has been considered the most cited author in comparative studies at our universities (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 1997; Gjurginov 1998; Sheleva 2000). Sheleva’s work, *From Dialogism to Intertextuality* (2000), clearly depicts comparatists’ shifting interest from Bakhtin’s dialogism towards post-structural ideas and postmodern openness and intersections. This process led to a series of comparative studies dedicated to intertextuality (see Gjeorgjieva 2003, 2008 and 2011) and other narratological intrinsic features of literary work (see Srbinska 2000), along with mainstream postmodern discourses (see Prokopiev 2005).

Comparative hermeneutics is another field of research led by Professor Katica Kulavkova, a poetess and a leading comparatist (one of the three comparatists working at MASA), Chair of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee of PEN International. She is well-known for carrying out the project *Dialogue of Interpretations* (2005) organized in cooperation with the French comparatists Jean Bessière, Philippe Daros and other comparative literature professors. She also headed the project *Interpretative Methods* which enters in its final stage this year and is one of the few grand achievements and complex symbioses of the literary, theoretical, philosophical, hermeneutical and comparative potentials of

¹ See www.mirage.com.mk

² See www.philologicalstudies.org

Macedonian humanistic studies. Kulavkova is also responsible for carrying out the project *Balkan's Image of the World*, a collaboration between the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Polish Academy of Sciences (2005). This project is just one of the many endeavours that have indicated the dominance of the imagological approach at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Macedonian comparative literature studies (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 2005a; Kulavkova 2008; Srbinovska 2009; Gurcinova 2011; Mojsieva-Gusheva 2011). However, this is not about restoring classical imagology from the Aachen School of Hugo Dyerinck. It is rather about a type of imagology that may reflect the general humanistic interest in the issue of identity, which was typical for the time. Macedonian comparatists interested in adopting and applying the postcolonial theoretical apparatus in their own research increasingly needed translations of the studies in the field of postcolonial literary theory (Edward Saïd, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha). A special incentive in this direction was the emergence of the concept of "Balkanism" introduced as a counterpart of Saïd's "Orientalism" by the Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova (1997) and further developed by other scholars from the Balkans, such as Vesna Goldsworthy (1998). A number of Macedonian comparatists recognize closeness and familiarity between their own existential and cultural situation and the ideas and vocabulary of postcolonial criticism. Their work focuses on detecting negative stereotypes of Balkan cultures, especially in the Macedonian culture. These topics include the theories of cultural hegemony, centre and periphery, national identities and narratives, cosmopolitanism, hybrid identities, in addition to the poetics of exile, home and homelessness, cultural differences, mimicry, and third space. The application of this theoretical model of postcolonial criticism in Macedonian comparative literature studies is most consistently implemented in Elizabeta Sheleva's theoretical analysis. She is a distinguished university professor, critic, author and translator of a number of significant books related to literary, theoretical, and cultural studies (2005, 2007, 2008 and 2014).

The reception of postcolonial criticism in Macedonia is only a segment of the general tendency to converge the literary studies into cultural studies. By focusing on the problem of nation, ethnicity, gender, and race, comparative literature studies have become a vital element for other fields of research, such as sociology, political science, anthropology, and many other disciplines, which all together transform into an encompassing interdisciplinary cultural approach in the analysis of literary phenomena. In this context, a rising number of feminist articles have been published,

especially in the field of gynocriticism (see Kulavkova 2016; Avramovska 2005 and 2011; Bakovska 2016).

Apart from the predominantly culturological approach with strong sociocultural, ideological, and other non-aesthetic premises in studying literature, another tendency of current research is found in the field of intermediality, *i.e.*, the study of intersemiotic relations between literature, cinema, visual arts, music, and performance. A prominent figure in this field is Vladimir Martinovski (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2016), a Macedonian poet and university professor specialized in the use of *ekphrasis* and the exploration of the correlation between literature and music or other arts. Slavica Srbinovska (2008 and 2011), on the other hand, has developed her comparative research interests in adaptation studies, cinema, and other visual arts.

Last but not least, there is a rising interest in traductology, influenced by Susan Bassnett's idea of accepting comparative literature as a science of literary translations, in which Macedonian scholars, such as Anastasia Gjurgcinova (2013, 2013a and 2015), a critic and professor at the Department of Italian Studies, address and investigate specific problems of literary translation.

2. The current status of comparative literature in Macedonia

All the aforementioned scholars and university professors have been engaged in teaching comparative literature seminars at our universities and have contributed with a variety of articles and books. Apart from teaching at the university, they have also been recognized as leading intellectuals in Macedonian culture, especially in the field of journalism, cultural diplomacy, and politics. The department of comparative literature has proved to be a great source of academics despite all the difficulties that this institution had to face over the past years. At the beginning, the Department was challenged by traditional literary scholars who emphasized the importance of building a national literature, instead of calling attention to a comparative study of world literatures. In the end however, more and more philological and literary scholars began to embrace the comparative theory and method. This was especially popular in the late 1990s, following the 1991 Declaration of the Independence of the Republic of Macedonia, when the comparative approach was supported by the academic community as a justified way of building national cultural values in correspondence with cultural values of other nations. Contrary to the current general perception that comparative

literature studies might be perceived as outdated or problematic, Macedonia is a living example of how comparative studies are still considered to be quite relevant. Since 2003, a new optional course in comparative literature has been offered in the final year of humanity-oriented high schools. For this purpose, a book was edited by a group of literary scholars (Stojmenska-Elzeser, Mironska-Hristovska, Georgievska-Jakovleva and Avramovska 2004). In terms of resources and tools, aside from the necessary translations of the most prominent books in the field of comparative literature, I have also published in 2007 a chrestomathy of *Comparative Literature*, consisting of essays written by the following authors: Mikhail Bakhtin, Hugo Dyserinck, Jean-Marc Moura, Itamar Even-Zohar, André Lefevere, Leo H. Hoeck, Ernest B. Gilman, Ania Loomba, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Rosi Braidotti, Luce Irigaray, Margaret R. Higonnet, Mary Louise Pratt, Armando Gnisci, and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek.

As previously mentioned, the current trend in Macedonian comparative literature studies seems to be shifting towards the broad field of cultural studies. This interest in interdisciplinary cultural studies can also be detected in the graduate programs and courses including Masters and doctoral degrees at the Institute of Macedonian Literature where the following courses have been offered since 2007: European cultural context; Balkan cultural identities; Byzantine cultural studies; gender and culture; intercultural communication; cultural geography; elite and mass cultures; culture and globalization, etc. In this respect, scholars contest dominant narratives of European sense of belonging and identity and explore the construction of “Europeanity” and the image of Europe from a Macedonian perspective (see Gjurcinova 2012; Prokopiev 2016). Another field of interest is the exploration of urban identities in European cities, cultural projections of European regions, the overcoming of Eurocentrism and other similar topics that rethink the European cultural identity as a complex and enigmatic concept (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 2014). The question of European identity is especially intriguing for Macedonian intellectuals as it evokes a general feeling of stigmatization, arising from the conflict of their own self-perception as Europeans according to their primary cultural orientation and as citizens who are being labelled as non-Europeans every time they go abroad. This type of categorization prevents them from actively participate in the European Union. The formal non-belonging of Macedonia in the European Union, despite its strong historical sense of European values, has not only reflected on contemporary writings, but it has also entered the discourse of theoretical studies, and consequently of comparative and cultural studies.

In addition to cultural studies, a number of scholars have developed an interest in spatial determination and positioning in culture. This topic became rather prominent after the so-called “Spatial Turn” in humanities at the turn of the twenty-first century (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 2011; 2013). This subject was additionally explored at the 4th International REELC/ENCLS Congress, entitled *Literary Dislocations/Déplacements Littéraires/Книжевни дислокации* hosted by Macedonian comparative scholars and critics and held from September 1st-3rd 2011 in Skopje and in Ohrid. The proceedings were edited by Martinovski and myself, and published the following year. This congress marked the thirtieth anniversary since the first International Conference of comparative studies that took place in the ancient city of Ohrid. It was well received by a great number of scholars. This attests to the growing interest in and development of comparative studies. The topic of spatiality has a wide range of manifestations in Macedonian comparative literary studies. It gave rise to the idea of the nomadic spirit which was primarily stipulated by Kenneth White’s geopoetics. In addition, the theory of nomadic subjects by Rosi Braidotti was also widely accepted in the Macedonian academic community. Later studies continued in the direction towards exploring mapping in literature, *i.e.*, the emergence of geocritical explorations under the influence of Franco Moretti, Bertrand Westphal, and other literary scholars. Consequently, it continued towards the interpretation of the poetics of the borders, of exile, of migrations, including heterotopic variations, and so on (see Sheleva 2005, 2008 and 2014).

The symbiotic relationship between comparative and cultural studies can be detected by a shift from strictly elitist literary themes to popular culture with all its nuances. This shift in research focus was also recognized during the international conference, *Popular Culture: Reading from Below*, which was organized by the Institute of Macedonian Literature in 2014. It marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the United Kingdom. The conference was attended by many prominent literary scholars who made a significant contribution in such a provocative subject (edited by Martinoska and Jakimovska-Toshic 2016).

3. Macedonian standpoint

It would seem legitimate to say that comparative literature studies are a specific type of critical thinking and way of existing in the world. The comparative study of national literatures and cultural values is the only

way to recognize and appreciate one's uniqueness. It involves an awareness of a constant process of interference and creative complementation in order to have an understanding of global values. Drawing on these conclusions, comparative scholars in Macedonia are more open to learning new ideas and insights from other cultures, while they are also making an effort to put their national cultural values on the global map of the world community.

The current ideological and political momentum of Macedonia allows for the possibility of recognizing our comparative scholars as cultural diplomats. We have witnessed a series of comparative literary meetings dedicated to establishing relations of collaboration between domestic and foreign cultures. For instance, the Institute of Macedonian Literature has organized conferences on Macedonian-Slovak cultural relations (edited by Jakimovska-Toshic, Taneski and Koviloski 2016; see also Taneski 2012). Several conferences have also been devoted to linguistic, literary, and cultural contacts with Croatia, Poland, the United States, and other academic communities. These events have proved to be an incentive for embracing diversity and meeting new people and colleagues round the globe. Cultural affirmation is more than relevant to our society. For the last twenty-six years, our independent sovereign state has been facing multiple challenges and obstacles in its relations with the international community. Macedonian culture is perceived as a peripheral and a subaltern culture. This is the result of being part of various colonial constellations for centuries: the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and even the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia where Macedonian culture functioned with a problematic cultural autonomy within the federation of six republics. This perception continues to haunt our culture as Macedonia is still waiting to join the EU. This is why questions of identity are so important in Macedonian comparative studies. Additionally, the real multiculturalism and the subtle Balkan understanding of identity relations underline the need for comparative literature and culture. However, there have not been enough extensive studies with regard to comparative and cultural exchange between our country and our neighbours, apart from a few projects that were carried out by the Institute of Macedonian Literature. One of those projects is entitled *Gender Images in Macedonian and Albanian Culture and Social Life* (2007-2008). The two projects entitled *Modernism as European Value in Macedonian and Bulgarian Literature of the Twentieth century* (edited by Gjurginov and Iordanov, 2015) and *Balkan Identity/Identities* (edited by Kulavkova and Bozikova, 2016) were run by both the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Bulgarian

Academy of Sciences and Arts. There have not been any serious mutual initiatives for doing a research in collaboration with Greece. Nevertheless, a comparative approach to the Balkan cultural conglomerate may be strongly felt in a couple of projects, for instance *Balkans' Image of the World* (organized by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2005), and *Resemblances Between Macedonian Literature and Other Balkan Literatures* (Institute of Macedonian Literature, 2002-2004).

The literature of the so-called “small” nations like Macedonia cannot easily reach out to readers from other countries. When the source literature is minor, the first step is to support and provide a literary translation of the highest quality. Secondly, a comparative research of Macedonian cultural values in the context of world literatures is needed to allow greater visibility and recognition of its specificities in the era of globalization.

This is why comparative literature is highly convenient for Macedonian literature and culture as a humanistic discipline showing appreciation of cross-cultural interconnections and diversity of literatures and cultures. We may confirm that comparative research methodology and *ethos* are widely accepted in all the academic disciplines of Macedonian scholarly community.

Conclusion

Comparative literature is probably one of the most disputed humanistic disciplines in recent years. In fact there have been constant speculations and discussions about the “crisis” of comparative literature as a discipline. However, its primary principle of comparison does not seem to cease the enormous heuristic emission potential and the capacity to continue with relevant interdisciplinary research that may help understand and improve human life. The ethical dimension of comparative literature studies promotes the mutual understanding and interweaving of diverse cultures. This is perhaps why it is so appealing to the Macedonian social environment, which is suffering the stigmatization of being experienced as a peripheral and a minor culture, and which is in a constant struggle for self-affirmation. Due to these circumstances, comparative literature and cultural studies are not perceived only as academic disciplines, but they have become a widely accepted *modus vivendi*. Comparative literature in Macedonia today is predominantly focused on its symbiotic relation to cultural studies even though potentially distancing itself from its primary interest in aesthetic values. Academic and scientific spheres of comparative studies are chiefly interested in the politics of identity, power,

voicelessness, commercialization, consumerism, etc., leaving the subjects of aesthetics and literature reception second. That is why the reconciliation between cultural and aesthetic curiosity has also been perceived as one of the main challenges of comparative studies in Macedonia today (see Stojmenska-Elzeser 2013).

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MOLE READS THE WORLD. PARADOXES OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN POLAND

EWA ŁUKASZYK

In 1961, during his American exile in Berkeley, Czesław Miłosz (1964, 46-49) wrote an extensive poem “Po ziemi naszej”, auto-translated (in collaboration with Peter Dale Scott) as “Throughout Our Lands”. His attempt was to define the problematic Polish-Lithuanian stance in comparison to the universal culture epitomized by names, places and external signs of civilized living. He accumulates poetic allusions to Walt Whitman, Pascal, Mozart, Sade, as well as various references to the Spanish conquest of the Americas, contrasting them with his own identity as a Barbarian, an outsider of civilization, the one lacking “the lace of cuffs” and “the table carved with lions” to dine in a refined way.

Certainly, both the supposed traits of civilization (Sade’s “naked nuns in black-net stockings to lash us with a whip as we bite the bedsheets”) and Miłosz’s own identity as a Barbarian (“squishing with my big toe the warm muck of the dunghill”) are presented ironically. Nonetheless, by some obscure phenomenon of memory and association, precisely this poem came to my mind when I was asked to comment on the destinies of comparative literature in Poland. I think it is a good starting point to comment on its paradoxes. In order to understand it, we should ask first what the cultural positioning of the Poles toward the world is and what the world and its literature may be for them. Miłosz (*ibid.*, 46) answers this question in a bitter, yet, as I believe, extremely pertinent way:

If I had to tell what the world is for me
I would take a hamster or a hedgehog or a mole
and place him in a theatre seat one evening
and, bringing my ear close to his humid snout,

would listen to what he says about the spotlights,
sounds of the music, and movements of the dance.

The world is for a Pole what a theatrical spectacle would be for a mole: distant and dazzling. The comment that the mole might make is tiny and low; no wonder it would be harken to but very rarely. On the other hand, it is symptomatic that this image comes from none other than Miłosz in Berkeley, the translator of several Japanese poets, the one who made a poetic adaptation of the gnostic *Hymn to the Pearl* and the “ecstatic poems” of Kabir, based on the versions of Robert Bly and Tagore. The auto-ironic stance adopted by Miłosz illustrates, in my opinion, the particular situation of the Poles, suspended between the longing for great universalist horizons and a peculiar world blindness, allegedly imposed by the political situation in the past and, as I believe, self-inflicted in the present.

During the period of political transition there was another, less serious yet not less pertinent, approach to understanding the peculiarity of the Polish situation: the comedy *King Size (Kingsajz)* by Juliusz Machulski (1987). The allegory presented Poland as *Drawerland (Szuflandia)*, a country located in an abandoned library catalogue hidden deep in the underground of the Quaternary Research Institute, inhabited by gnomes. Living under a tiny dictator and in a constant shortage of supplies, those tiny people represented an unmistakably Polish, Romantic mentality, nurturing lofty dreams of freedom. The conspirators, Adaś and Olo, strive to discover the Formula enabling them to access the “Kingsajz”, the world of the fully-grown, which was at the same time the only dimension in which they could meet any foreigners. Their homeland, situated underground, had no frontiers and no neighbours. Discovering the Formula, the heroic gnomes intended to break the official monopoly reserving a privileged group the right of drinking “Polo-Cockta”, a rather mysterious brew, sold in communist Poland as a local ersatz of western Coca-Cola. Having discovered the secret of its production, they attempt to flee westwards, yet the train that should transport them to freedom proves to be a mere toy speeding on a circular rail across the lawn in front of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. Finally, the gnomes fail not only to remain fully-grown, but also to encounter the world, a reality vaster and richer than their own tiny homeland in a drawer.

It has been only in the last two decades that the Poles have started to travel freely. Till the end of the nineties, a long-distance journey was nothing more than a dream, a desire, a mirage. No wonder that their

culture developed this peculiar blindness which is epitomized by a tourist that I met while doing my research in Guinea-Bissau, an ex-Portuguese colony in West Africa that is currently one of the poorest countries of the world. As those people simply do not have sufficient crops at the end of the dry season, all of them are skinny; yet my Polish fellow explorer attributed the fact to some kind of miraculous, “natural and healthy” diet. So he exhorted me not to give any sweets to those children in fear that chocolate might spoil their salutary habits. This is, of course, just an anecdote, and the stupidity of tourists is universal. Yet Poland is also a country where one can see the word “refugee” spelled with quotation marks or used as a part of the expression “the so-called refugees”, because the majority believe that the word refers to a category of clever foreign dodgers searching for an easy life, if not insidious enemies coming to destroy our Civilization. Great tragedies and large-scale calamities are invisible from the perspective of a mole, certainly not a keen reader of contemporary migrant literature.

Admitting that moles and gnomes do read any books whatsoever¹, the perspective of developing a comparative literature out of these readings is hindered by a twofold problem. The recognition of one’s own minor stance in relation to the greatness of “Civilization” (the concept should be taken *cum grano salis*) leads to a deficient, disturbed participation; on the other hand, the hypothesis of a universal solidarity of the Barbarians, sketched by Miłosz, is rejected. What results from this twofold process is a peculiar situation of falling out of joint simultaneously on both planes presumably forming the landscape of the *Weltliteratur*: that of the Eurocentric “great classics”—which in the Polish optics appear as too lofty to be critically approached—, as well as that of “worlding indigenities”—too distant to be fully apprehended. In the meanwhile, what appears as the current working definition of Polishness is the viewpoint resumed by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (2011, 46) in a short note under the title *Polishness, or Everything (Polskość, czyli wszystko)*:

What is connected to the notion of Polishness for me? Everything. What is Polishness for me? Everything. [...] For me, everything is connected to

¹ The Polish conceptualization of a gnome, immortalized by the nineteenth-century writer Maria Konopnicka in her tale *On Gnomes and Mary the Little Orphan (O krasnoludkach i o sierotce Marysi)*, published for the first time in 1896, attributes to the imaginary beings such as Koszałek-Opalek the taste for cultivating a bookish, anti-empirical kind of knowledge, at odds with the most obvious aspects of reality. Presumably, this is the reason why Machulski located his Drawerland in an abandoned library catalogue.

Polishness and only to Polishness—and this is my misery, my unhappiness, my stupidity. I am of this and for this reason ignorant. And unfortunately there is no remedy for this ignorance. At least, I do not see any. Simply, I do not know anything else, I have never experienced anything else. As I am not young any longer—fifty-two years old—, one may presume that I would not experience anything else any more.

In such a self-contained cultural reality, comparative literature may only appear as a countercultural current, giving access to the denied sphere of experience located beyond Polishness. Paradoxically, this is perhaps its place and its greatest promise, overcoming the limitations of an academic discipline among many others.

In the light of what has been sketched above, it appears as a paradox that a Polish universalist tradition does exist. A glance at the great figures illustrating comparative literature in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century apparently contradicts the pessimistic image of a burrowing culture. Two emblematic figures of Polish literary scholars immediately come to mind: those of Tadeusz Zieliński (1859-1944) and Edward Porębowicz (1862-1937). The first one was a classical philologist, working on such topics as the prose rhythm in Cicero. His comparative research on the development of the European *epos* remains in the shadow of his more widely acknowledged achievements in Greek and Roman philology. In this field, central as it was in that epoch, he also tried to introduce the comparative method, bringing folk tales of various peoples to shed an additional light on the Attic heritage and help to reconstruct the texts that had reached our times as shattered fragments. Yet far more importantly, his work could be appreciated as a broader, universalist construction in which the classics were to serve as a foundation. As Stefan Srebrny (2013, 120) stressed in an extensive obituary essay originally published in 1947, Tadeusz Zieliński should be remembered as “the man who played such an important role not merely in the systematic, scholarly study of classics, but also in building a culture based on connecting to it and understanding its spirit”. As he adds further on, “describing, analysing and assessing Zieliński as a mere classicist would result in a partial, one-dimensional and colourless picture, while actually he strikes one first of all with his many-facetedness and colour” (*ibid.*, 121).

Certainly, Zieliński did not live in a drawer. On the contrary, his biography expands across frontiers and national territories. Born in a Polish family inhabiting the present-day Ukraine, he soon found himself inserted in the multicultural context of the Russian capital as a disciple of Annenschule, Saint Anna German High School in Saint Petersburg. His

further experience brought him progressively westwards: he studied at the Leipzig University (1876-1880) and, having completed his doctorate, moved to Munich and Vienna for advanced studies in archaeology and epigraphy. His Russian master and doctoral dissertations, later translated into German and published as *Die Gliederung der altattischen Komödie* (Zieliński 1885), complete this complex panorama of academic achievements. If one adds to this some quite extensive journeys in Italy and Greece, it becomes easy to understand that the triumphant years of the sexagenarian Zieliński at the University of Warsaw, coinciding with the enthusiastic beginnings of the newly recovered Polish independence, were based on his solid European experience.

The same may be said about Edward Porębowicz, acknowledged as the emblematic figure of a Polish Romanist. He studied at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, which was at the time a part of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, a crown land of the Austrian Empire. In 1890, he obtained his doctoral degree in Vienna. His obtained habilitation (a post-doctoral degree required in order to conduct self-contained university teaching) in Lviv, where he became a full professor in 1907. Finally, during the academic year 1925/26, he was elected rector of the John Casimir University (today's Ivan Franko National University). It appears that, contrary to Zieliński, Porębowicz remained inside a single sphere, namely that of the eastern provinces of the Austrian empire, throughout his academic career. This however is not entirely true. His five-year-long research travel, made possible due to the generous support of the prince Adam Sapieha in 1883, brought him westwards to Berlin, Munich, Montpellier, Barcelona, and Florence. Later on he also stayed in Paris for several years. If he was to become the first great figure that could be fully associated with comparativism in Poland, it was due not only to his knowledge of practically all Romance languages and literatures, but also to his competence in German and English. He was thus able to build an encompassing outlook on the literature of Western Europe, treating it as an organic whole. Furthermore, he wrote on Polish Romantic literature, presenting it as a part of this European organism. This was in contrast with the predominant Polish tradition that was prone to accentuate the idiosyncrasy and untranslatable, uniquely domestic inscription of the so-called "Three Bards" (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński).

Working against the temptation of untranslatability repeatedly haunting the Polish mind, Porębowicz immortalized himself as a translator, together with another emblematic figure in this domain, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (1874-1941). In today's perspective, this durable importance as the Polish translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy* may

overshadow other achievements of the Romanists from Lviv. His monograph on the Tuscan poet (Porębowicz 1922), as well as the former one, on Francis of Assisi (Porębowicz 1899), are often considered merely as popular books. However Porębowicz was also an indefatigable student of the troubadours. His work in this domain, partially due to the relative absence of Occitan in the present-day landscape of Polish Romance studies, is still an important legacy. This concern with medieval poetry was comparativist to the marrow, as it was yet another occasion to present the phenomena on a large scale, a European outlook. Unfortunately, the impact of this work remained limited to the domestic circles. Contrary to Zieliński, Porębowicz published only in Polish; his ideas, even if they genetically belonged to the European academic context, never circulated on an international level. This is why he is less known outside Poland than Zieliński, whose ideas on the Greco-Roman Messianism (presented as the true origin of Christianity in detriment of the Semitic contribution) continue to be quoted as a reference in many studies, at least those concerning the intellectual climate of his time. Even if such ideas must remain historically confined in the compromised context of the pre-Second World War German tradition, keen to introduce the reductive *Jews-versus-Aryans* conceptualization of the Mediterranean past, Zieliński's name provoked far greater resonance than that of Porębowicz. This is the fate of the scholarly authors choosing to publish in those languages situated beyond the narrow range of international communication.

Marginalization of the scholars publishing in minor languages is only one of the obstacles hindering academic development in Central and Eastern Europe. The very process of transferring ideas eastwards and westwards proves to be extremely energy-consuming. Zieliński's double doctoral dissertation may serve as an example. The problem, still unsolved today, lies not only in the lack of formal recognition between the academic systems, but also, more importantly, in the disparity of intellectual criteria. This is why the innovative ideas that Zieliński brought from Germany proved too revolutionary for the Russian context. His dissertation, rejected in Saint Petersburg, was finally defended at the University of Dorpat (today's Tartu in Estonia), where Zieliński's Germanic way of thinking could find closer affinities. This range of problems, together with the time-consuming task of translating one's own texts from one language to another, contribute to hinder the progress of the scholars whose fate is to inhabit the peripheral or intermediary zones of the academic systems. Few things have changed in this aspect since the nineteenth century. The necessity of inserting one's innovative ideas into a conservative context (in which a specific set of discourse practices and usages remains valid)

often produces, even today, a scholar who, having reined his or her originality, falls between two positions, rejected for being too daring in one academic sphere, and not interesting enough in the other.

Reading between the lines of even such an encomiastic text as Srebrny's obituary makes it possible to understand that the great part of Zieliński's energy was consumed in bringing less revolutionary ideas closer to the Russian and Polish academic mentality, toiling to break the resistance provoked by their strangeness. Yet still, this is only a part of the problem. The moroseness in accepting those novelties made the reception of Zieliński's writings a lingering task among the Polish classicists. The mere continuation of this work contributed to create a larger-than-life, emblematic figure dwarfing other people and ideas. Arguably, Zieliński's European stature, over-advertised for such events as the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his doctoral degree, was instrumentalised to cover the shortcomings of the general academic landscape of those early years of Polish independence. Overall, the lingering habit of fixing one's glance on those sacralised figures hindered the natural evolution of research priorities and interests. What is more, those immortalised heroes failed to become the new standard of scholarly activity. Towards the end of the last decade of the twentieth century, I could still experience the long shadow of Porębowicz in the beginnings of my own career as a Romanist. The fact that he knew all the main Romance languages—not a superhuman achievement in itself—did not mean that such a degree of polyglottism later became expected or required in the Polish Romance studies circles. On the contrary, any attempt at developing such a competence was seen as a gesture of unpardonable presumption and an ambition guilty of attempting to equal a semi-god.

The Polish academic history that must be taken into account in the discussion concerning the perspectives of comparative literature suffers major disruptions. One of them was undoubtedly the *Sonderaktion Krakau*, a Nazi operation targeting the professors of the Jagiellonian University, part of a larger *Intelligenzaktion* aiming at eradicating the Polish intellectual elite in order to replace it by a culturally new German group. On November 6th, 1939, the faculty was invited to attend a lecture, presumably presenting the current plans concerning higher education in Poland. Yet the professors gathered only to be arrested and transported first to Breslau and then to Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps. Post-war history was also disrupted in many ways. It was marked, in the first place, by the great exodus of the scholars that followed the redesigning of their national frontiers. Leading academic centers such as Lviv and Vilnius were now situated outside the Polish territory. New

universities were progressively created and populated by professors coming from the former eastern regions of Poland. The biography of Zygmunt Czerny (1888-1975), the designated successor of Porębowicz in Lviv, who was to become one of the organizers of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, may serve as an exemplification of these historical circumstances. However, these new institutions surely needed a long time to take roots before any serious attempt at equalling European levels of academic excellence could be made. Furthermore, teaching foreign languages and literatures was not always the first priority. As a consequence, there is a gap of several rather shadowy decades between the times when Porębowicz studied and translated medieval Iberian *coplas* and the creation of a curriculum in Spanish philology at the Jagiellonian University in 1975.

This period of democratic transition certainly revived interest in foreign languages and literatures. English emerged as especially tempting to the new generation whose educational perspectives were now enriched due to the unprecedented availability of international fellowships. The rediscovered possibility of research mobility introduced, not without its obstacles, a true watershed in the Polish academic world. That the major part of the faculty belonging to the former generation had never left Poland, not even for an international conference; any such opportunity was treated as an exceptional privilege, usually reserved to those who had sufficiently proven their ideological correctness. Nonetheless, the new atmosphere rapidly provoked/brought about the surge of at least one remarkable comparatist center, located at the University of Silesia, thanks to the charismatic figure of a poet, translator and literary scholar, Tadeusz Sławek (born in 1946). His biography exemplifies the new opportunities.

In 1971, Sławek concluded his studies of Polish and English literature at the Jagiellonian University, where the leading figure of the time was Henryk Markiewicz, a scholar interested in the new schools of literary analysis multiplying “abroad”. The very possibility of using such a generic term—Markiewicz’s most influential book had the title *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą* (*Contemporary Theory of Literary Investigations Abroad*, 1970-1973)—was in itself a *signum temporis*. Even if this extensive publication was a turning point (its second volume introducing comparative literature together with/in addition to structuralism and psychoanalysis), the new generation of scholars inherited decades of overdue work. Sławek was employed, initially as a teacher of English, at the University of Silesia, an emergent institution created only three years earlier. In 1979-1980, he completed his Fulbright

fellowship, the new defining distinction for many Polish scholars, opening his way to several visiting professorships in the United States and Great Britain. In 1996-2002, the seriousness of Sławek's responsibilities as the rector of the University of Silesia coincided, in a way that was unthinkable several years earlier—and perhaps unthinkable in the years to come—, with the activities of a stage artist and performer. Since 1978, Sławek has collaborated with a double bass player Bogdan Mizerski, recording a series of “essays for voice and double bass”.

The long-haired figure of the Silesian professor marked the freshness and promise of the nineties in Poland. So did his work in comparative literature. Sławek's greatest achievement in this domain should not be cited as a single, particularly significant title reformulate (although he has published several books in Polish and English, with a particular incidence, among other topics, on the poetry of William Blake; see Sławek 1985). It is far more crucial to mention his importance as a creator of a new genre of writing. Sławek's essayistic formula differs in a blatant way from the muddy discourse of the previous generation. His writing is at the same time precise and labyrinthine, experimental and grounded in solid scholarship. Moving freely between works and authors, mainly taken from the Anglo-Saxon tradition but in no way limited to it, Sławek has built up an innovative conceptual language, operating mainly by spatial notions, often related to intimacy, earth and the locatable dimension of human existence. In this way, he contributed to the emergence of the Silesian school of “oikology”, the literary study of home and inhabitancy, rooted in the idiosyncratic experience of relationship between man and the earth that is proper to Silesia and differs significantly from the mainstream conceptualization of Polishness (see Sławek *et al.* 2013).

This strategy of writing, fully acknowledging one's own locatable, regional inscription, overcomes a series of impediments. Miraculously, Sławek's ability to move between Polish and English as languages of literary and scholarly expression creates a synergy precisely in what constitutes the main hindrance for the vast majority of his colleagues. It is yet another paradox that in a country that gave to universal literature the genius of Joseph Conrad lamentably few scholars manage to write fluently in English.

During the ambivalent decade of 1990, marked both by the newly acquired awareness of academic insufficiency and the giddiness of the new horizons, comparative literature emerged as an aspiration, a synonym of a certain “worldliness” and erudition. One of the paradoxes of this aspiration lies in the fact that it has flourished among the Polish literature scholars, rather than in the circles of foreign languages and literature scholars, as in

the Silesian case. Throughout the post-war decades, Polish language and literature faculties (*polonistyka*) at the leading universities of Kraków and Warsaw were undoubtedly gathering the best and the most ambitious literary scholars of the country. Approaching the turn of the millennium, these two institutes formed the receptive core where literary theory as well as some of the emergent currents of contemporary humanities were discussed. Yet it is still very common to encounter even a prominent Polish literary scholar without a fluency in any foreign language. This is why the articulation of this milieu with the international context of scholarship has to be mediated, resulting in untimely reception of new ideas. Unsurprisingly, also the attempts at developing comparative literature as an academic practice inscribed in the framework of *polonistyka* have been conditioned by translations, not only of literature, but also of the main theoretical works. On the other hand, the academic results are discussed mainly in Polish-speaking conferences. A more substantial participation of the Polish colleagues in the congresses periodically organized by the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) became visible only quite recently, at the 2016 congress in Vienna. Polish is also the predominant language of publication in the leading journals dedicated to comparative literature: *Porównania*, created in 2004 at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and *Rocznik komparatystyczny*, existing since 2010 at the University of Szczecin. The multilingual covers and English abstracts are proof of internationalizing ambitions, but the Polish-speaking content of the contributions unfortunately limits the impact of these publications. On the other hand, the current efforts of the most active comparatists, such as Marta Skwara in Szczecin and Adam Kola, the organizer of the Polish Comparative Literature Association in Toruń, appear to be insufficient in providing this scattered academic circle with sufficient dynamism and cohesion.

Certainly those endeavours have a considerable domestic impact, enriching the Polish culture in many elements that had been missing throughout the past decades, yet they can hardly ever reach a level of international visibility. This is how the allegory of *Kingsajz* presented by Machulski thirty years ago remains painfully valid for the Polish academia today. The most important *polonistyka* scholars seem to belong to a separate dimension, still out of joint with the international scholarship. Developing comparative approaches might have been an obvious remedy to this problem, yet apparently it failed to solve the essential discrepancy between our domestic intellectual life and the international context. Unsurprisingly, the isolationist stance, such as that of Rymkiewicz quoted

in the introductory part of this essay, grows stronger, boosted by the awareness of the years passing by and the pessimistic perception that, if we have failed to know anything beyond Polishness so far, it becomes improbable that we might get any chance of discovering it in the future.

In the first decade of the new century, the question of internationalizing the Polish academia was repeatedly discussed, yet predominantly understood in a rather reductive way as the necessity of gaining increased visibility abroad. The place of the Polish universities in the global rankings was seen as an important issue. Many voices claimed that the two leading ones, the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, should soon reach the first hundred in the top rankings. Such hopes have been contradicted by the opposite tendency: our position has been deteriorating year by year, and this unpleasant fact has given birth to a creeping sensation of helplessness. The measures that had been taken, such as the project of financing the translation of entire issues of our literary studies journals into English, brought no other result but closing the vicious circle of academic inefficiency. The hope that European funding would boost our place in the international academic world dissipated as well. The European Research Council and its fabulous grants became new myths of Polish imagination, while the actual participation remained limited to just a few financed projects for the entire domain of humanities in Poland.

Unfortunately, the discussion concerning academic excellence and the inclusion in the European structures of research has only made us see our deficiencies and the obstacles on our way toward unhindered participation. Instead of facing this new awareness with patience and readiness for sustained development, our academia, as well as society as a whole, responded with a new vogue of intellectual isolationism. The order of current academic priorities is connected to this general sociocultural landscape. Increasingly, the vision promoted by the official institutions is one of “national humanities” inscribed in a larger isolationist concept of national memory and identity rather than in the context of internationalized research and the search for academic excellence.

Certainly, this collapse can be explained in historical terms, not only those of *Sonderaktion Krakau*, but also those of the history of ideas. For a long time, Polish humanities in general and the literary studies in particular remained frozen in the period of formalism and classical structuralism, isolated from the international context by multiple political and economical obstacles. One might say that in terms of methodological inspirations and schools of reading we are still struggling to get out of our long eighties and nineties. French postmodernists caused a heated

controversy in the Polish academic milieu around the turn of the millennium. Unbelievably, the discussion on the perspectives of introducing postcolonial studies into Polish national humanities has been the concern of the current decade. A quarter of a century ago Polish scholars could hardly ever go abroad to participate in an international conference; the sad paradox is that now they can, but they often do not feel entirely at ease in the international context. The methodological gap proved to be surprisingly hard to close. At the University of Warsaw, special debates have been organized to discuss the problem of discrepancy or slippage between “our national humanities” and the “international ones”. The very fact that we pose the question in these terms, *i.e.* as an opposition, reveals the gist of the problem. We did not manage to reintegrate ourselves smoothly in the international humanities entering *in medias res*, as many of the non-European or non-Western scholars did. It seems to me that we are trying to work through all those stages that we have missed in the sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties, never reaching the decades in which we are actually living. The result is the appearance of two distinct temporalities. One is the time flow of the late comers, filled with Polish strenuous and desperate pedalling through the history that has been missed. Another one is the time flow of the changing paradigms and methodologies of what the literary studies have become in the perspective of the international scholarship.

The fact of coming late to international scholarship would not be such a problem if it had not become the source of a permanent minority syndrome. An alternative time flow, a distance in relation to our own time, even an anachronism may—as Giorgio Agamben (2010, 10-19) has suggested—turn into a great opportunity of insight and innovation. Yet this opportunity is wasted by the intricate ancillary relationship that Polish academics have established with the great centers of scholarship, preventing them from finding space for their own originality while leaving no alternative to the isolationist temptation. This academic isolationism is caused not only by the unwillingness to adopt more exigent standards, but also by an instinct of resistance to theory as something external, surreptitiously imposed. As if the French postmodernists were yet another great power similar to those responsible for the partitions of Poland, forcing us to abandon our culture and identity. Those instincts of resistance are historically justified. However this particular kind of resistance causes a double bind: literary theory is seen as something that comes from elsewhere. Resistance must be opposed to foreign theories, which however can only be bestowed as something foreign. Otherwise it is

completely missed. The idea of producing a theory in Poland finds no place in this reasoning.

This is certainly the darker side of the picture. Positive comments can also be made on literary studies in Poland. In contrast to what has been previously mentioned about the former decades, one might stress, for example, the recent development of various philological fields, such as Oriental studies. Apparently, a greater range of languages is taught at the universities in Warsaw and Kraków than at the University of Lisbon. This can be certainly transformed into an asset in a world that increasingly relies on English translations of world literature. In Poland, it is relatively easy to find scholars who find it unacceptable to engage academically in any kind of comparison without knowing the original languages of the texts in question—another paradox (in the light of what has been said about the comparatist aspirations of the Polish literary scholars) that can result in a crippling double bind or motivate a new effort towards increasing competence, honesty and precision. On the other hand, there is a peculiar phenomenon of resistance to foreign theory, but there is also a resistance to this resistance, as well as a resistance to the isolationist tendencies. These are certain mental and intellectual forces forming an extremely complex pattern of tensions. As in Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*, the awareness of being minor provokes a drive towards greatness, adulthood, and full participation. Returning to Miłosz's paradox, it is perhaps the Polish peripheral condition which gave birth to that strongly universalizing poet, in the same way that the Romanian peripheral condition gave birth to the intellectual voracity of Mircea Eliade. It might have been in opposition to the very fact of being a Romanian that he had proposed himself to undertake the feat of writing the general treatise of religious ideas of the humanity. In *Youth Without Youth*, he transformed the personal problem of a polyglot voracity into the literary figure of Dominic Matei (see Eliade 2007). I can speak about these contradictory processes out of my personal experience; in spite of the limiting, monolingual situation that I have partially sketched, I grew up to read quite comfortably in more than a dozen of languages. I mention this not to boast, but to show what the immersion in those intellectual tensions may imply for an individual scholar. This drive to compensate an eternal minority leads to accumulate competence over competence, just as it was the case for Dominic Matei, who aspired to learn all the Oriental languages.

In most academic disciplines, where specialization is required, such voracity would clearly be a hindrance, yet in comparative literature it is an asset. Just like Eliade's comparative religious studies, comparativism is

precisely the field in which this drive of adding competences may eventually lead to the emergence of a new, unexpected quality. The term “emergence” is problematic since it refers to a peculiar phenomenon of sudden qualitative change resulting from a quantitative increase exceeding a certain limit. In a physical emergence, the accumulated items collapse under their own weight, creating a radically new quality. Could this be our case? Mircea Eliade transcribed the unpredictable and catastrophic aspect of the emergence into the metaphor of a streak of lightning. The thunderbolt that fails to kill Dominic Matei gives him both a second youth and an unusual clarity of insight. This is, of course, a metaphor, and even if it completely refers to the mystery of the creative process, it would be difficult to translate it into an academic practice. Similarly, the eastern European strategies of dealing with one’s peripheral positioning in relation to the academic world are potentially lethal: serendipity, accumulation, and resistance to a method will not lead to any valuable results in most cases. Just once in a million, an intellectual emergence, like a streak of lightning, may illuminate things with a light that is not from this world—at least not from this academic world.

This discourse may sound esoteric, yet it is intended as a conclusion. As a collective academic practice—the nightmare of David Damrosch (2010) in his satirical novel *Meetings of the Mind*—comparative literature in Poland risks to collapse under numerous adverse circumstances. Nonetheless, I believe that individual scholars, making their muscle by roaming against the mainstream, may yet bring ground-breaking insights in defining the essence of the comparativist *ethos*: that of being non-domestic and non-national. The condition of a mole was after all the starting point of none other than Czesław Miłosz. Thus not a circumstance to despise.

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