

## *Introductory Note*

With its nearly forty articles by literary and cultural scholars from the entire world, the present *Interlitteraria* 16/2011 has become the most voluminous thematic *miscellanea*-issue of our journal to date. It shows comparative literature at work in its varied fields. It also demonstrates that especially in an annual journal it is hardly a good idea to launch exclusively monographic issues: a remarkably great potential of scholars would be left without a chance to contribute over a longer lapse of time. Thematic adaptation which has become anyway a suspicious feature in cultural scholarship – researchers being increasingly manipulated by fashionable topics, which are ever and ever repeated from one conference and seminar to other, with little hope to add anything substantially new to the area – has clearly its limits. Instead, we should try to introduce new topics of comparative literature and revive as well as reinterpret those unjustly destined for oblivion. It is also important to provide a chance to continue discussing important topics dealt with in the recent monographic issues of our journal.

Having in view the above said, it is our pleasure to include in the present *Interlitteraria* reflections by outstanding international scholars on the general landscapes of cultural and literary scholarship at the time when postmodern ideology seems to have exhausted its energies in the battle against “grand narratives” of the past and has left us in a spiritual void.

The fact that a number of essays in the present issue of *Interlitteraria* are dedicated to poetic issues, could be seen as a symptom of the need to fulfil a substantial gap in postmodern scholarship. With its cult of intellectual playfulness (ironies, simulacrum, logic-games) – a kind of a new mannerism –, on the one hand, and a conscious self-adaptation to the rules of market economy, on the other, it has persistently tried to drive poetry and, in particular, lyrical manifestation beyond the field of research.

However, reality contradicts it. Despite being declared by the main postmodern discourse unfashionable, poetry is being massively cultivated in all parts of the world. Festivals of poetry have become an ever expanding worldwide phenomenon, while even in the field of prose fiction works carrying poetic imagery, accents and rhythms have still the greatest chance to survive and be saved for posterity, once their coeval marketing clamour has died down.

Poetry still seems to be the gist of an honest response culture can hope to produce, to meet the spiritual needs of societies.

Therefore the effort to bring poetry to the research areas dominated in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by prose narrative can only be seen as highly desirable. Poets of the past have echoed their nation's deeper consciousness and aspirations. Why have we started to believe that poets cannot do it any longer? If poetry has been exhausted in "centres" – which is certainly far from being true –, why should we suppose that it cannot flourish in peripheral areas and in the creation of smaller nations?

It is a special honour to include in the present issue of *Interlitteraria* an homage by our long time Indian contributors to one of the greatest poets of the modern era, Rabindranath Tagore, in celebration of his 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of birth. Tagore was lucky to know English and to be able to translate his work into an international language. The same was not true at all of Tagore's contemporary Estonian poet Juhan Liiv. He spent his entire life in dire poverty and obscurity, writing the best part of his work between bouts of mental illness and did not manage to publish any book. Even now, nearly a hundred years after his death, though unanimously claimed as one of the greatest poetic voices of his country, Liiv is still nearly unknown outside Estonia and its language.

It is almost certain that there are a number of great poetic talents in the world, both in the past and present, still hidden from the scope of international cultural scholarship. Therefore it should be among the primary tasks of comparative literary research to bring their work to the fore of world's cultural conscience, as well as to explain the factors which until now have obstructed such an activity.

There is a good chance for it at the next international conference of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, "World Literature and National Literatures", to be held in Tartu at the end of September, this year. We will publish its papers in the next monographic issue of *Interlitteraria*. The manuscripts should arrive by January 31, 2012.

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