

Introductory Note

The expanding bureaucratization of science in our days is rapidly becoming a threat for serious academic research, especially in humanities, with its particular features, differentiating it from natural and exact sciences. To a radically greater extent than the latter, humanities have as their mission to orientate the world spiritually, philosophically and ideologically. It especially concerns the field of Comparative Literature, which since its emergence has had to develop between the Scylla of particularism and the Charybdis of universalism. For instance, if we should publish *Interlitteraria* only in the Estonian language, however excellent the contributions to the field by our Estonian literary scholars are, we clearly would remain absolutely isolated from the rest of the world and, thus, unable to take part in the international discussion. Few non-Estonians outside Estonia know our language. On the other hand, the universalist trend more than often reveals a tendency towards superficial pragmatism and monolingualism, which above all favours dominating ideological (bureaucratic as well as theoretical) monologues emanating from Western centres of power. They simplify the world, suppressing and deafening its natural and cultural diversity. They do not serve dialogue and understanding.

To provide an example of the above said, the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH), created to complement and, at least to some extent, provide a European counterweight to the US-dominated Thomson Reuters (formerly ISI) Web of Knowledge, included in its initial lists (from 2007) our *Interlitteraria* in the “B” category. In the revision process of these lists (2011), *Interlitteraria* was removed from international publications (listed under INT-1 and INT-2), to be qualified in the NAT category. The latter is defined in ERIH as including “European journals of significance in a particular country”.

Now, is *Interlitteraria* really of significance exclusively in and for Estonia? If so, we could well publish it in Estonian, without the great effort to have it published in four major Western languages, as we have done so far. From my experience as the editor I can say that until not long ago, two thirds of the articles published in *Interlitteraria* were submitted by international scholars from the whole world, and only one third by Estonian authors. In some of the recent issues, indeed, contributions by Estonians have increased, but all of them have still been written in English, German, French or Spanish, it means, in Western languages known to the greater part of comparatists around the world.

Interlitteraria has indeed become a forum for the exchange of ideas, at which the “other” Europe, not belonging to Western “centric” countries, has

been quite strongly visible. Talented comparative scholars from Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as from other “non-centric” countries, have been among our active contributors, discussing issues transcending their own national culture, like in the present issue, which has in its focus the interrelations between world literature and national literatures.

Is that internationality less valuable than the internationality by scholars working in English, French or German and publishing the fruits of their research in their “own” journals in Western “centric” countries? Our maybe our “fault” is that, even though the bulk of the articles we publish are in English – as many natural and exact scientists claim, the only true language of science – we still admit contributions also in German, Spanish and French?

ERIH has indeed some important phrases of “warning” on their home page, immediately before the lists of the journals and proceedings classified as INTs and NAT. They are worth quoting:

The content of the pages of this website is for your general information and use only and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual or entity. More specifically it is not intended as bibliometric information for use in assessment processes of individual candidates, be it for positions, promotions, research grant awards etc.

A nice and prudent declaration, indeed. But I am afraid science bureaucracy of especially those countries who do not belong to the Western European centric group, would hardly pay any serious attention to it. They only understand the “master’s voice”. And once the “master” has decided that this or that journal is not international, but just national, the local bureaucrats would obediently, without scruples adapt it to their own qualifications and systems, as “non-international” and, thus definitely, belonging to a lower class.

In whatever “class” we are and whatever the big and small “nationals” might think of us, I think we comparatists should work on in the name of a truly international dialogue in the field of the spirit. In its modest way, *Interlitteraria* will try to continue to contribute to this goal.

Our next issue (18, 2013) will be once again a thematic *miscellanea*. MSS should arrive by January 31, 2013.

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Editor