

## *Introduction*

In October 2017, members and guests of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature gathered in Tartu for the conference *Influence and Originality in Literary Creation*, twelfth edition in the series of international conferences organized by the ECLA. About a half of the speakers represented Central and Eastern European countries: Lithuania, Russia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Latvia. The conference solidified ECLA's traditional cooperation network, providing an opportunity to develop cooperation with long-time research partners and welcome new ones.

A strong emphasis was placed on Lithuanian literature, a welcome contribution to the development of contacts between literary scholars of the Baltic countries, which the ECLA sees as one of its priorities. An equally important standing objective, dialogue with distant cultures both in the Western and the Eastern world, was this time represented by speakers from France and South Korea. A third important dimension of ECLA's activities, establishing communication and peer relations between different generations of scholars, also benefited from the conference, as several doctoral students presented their research.

This issue of *Interlitteraria* reflects these lines of communication and cooperation, as it brings to its readers a selection of articles based on conference papers. While the origins and the objects of the papers are rather diverse, they find common ground in the realization that influence and originality are not distinct, mutually exclusive and opposable characteristics of literary works, but inseparable aspects of the complex process of literary creation. Instead of tracking the most straightforward contacts between works of literature, papers gathered in this volume explore various ways of how forms, motives, intentions, lines of thought and experience resonate between individual authors, even the most distant epochs and literary traditions, and different cultural practices. Literature is shown by these studies as a polyphonic and self-reflective network where reception is constantly transformed into creation, external impulse into a new idea or image that becomes the origin of further influences.

Just as the authors have brought this dynamic to light by finding common points between most diverse works of literature, readers may do so on their own, following the central problematics into various domains from one paper to another, and from conference proceedings into the *Miscellanea* section where it is as much of a core issue as in the thematic section. While the incentive provided by a thematic event encourages collegial discussion, with or without it,

literary scholarship inevitably deals with the question of how individuality and difference emerge from a shared point of origin, and how the difference helps us understand the nature of the shared experience behind individual expressions.

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