

From Ethical Aspects of Literature to Literary Historical Studies in an Intercultural Context: Some Research Findings in the Field of Intercultural Literary Studies¹

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In recent years, we have conducted research in various areas within the framework of the research programme Intercultural Literary Studies (No. P6-0265), especially on ethical aspects in literature, on the role and significance of translation as an intercultural mediation, on the literary-historical aspects of interculturality, and on the didactics of literature and translation. In the first part of this year's double issue of *Acta Neophilologica*² we present the latest findings of the researchers who make up the Intercultural Literary Studies programme group, and we have also invited colleagues from other programme groups as well as two colleagues from abroad.

In general, intercultural literary studies are based on concepts from literary studies, with a particular focus on intercultural theoretical concepts, for example on literary-transfer (Kortländer, Mitterbauer and Scherke), the concepts of ethical literary studies (Korthals Altes, Grehan, Wintersteiner, Virk), the sociological and socio-analytical ones (Wolf and Fukari, Bourdieu), postcolonial ones (Ashcroft et al.), interculturally hermeneutic and imagological ones (Pageaux, Beller and

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Leerssen, Waldenfels), as well as on various spiritual, receptional and literary-historical concepts (Winko and Köppe, Zupan Sosič), and on contemporary research in cultural and translation studies (Bassnet and Lefevere, Heilbron, "Translation" and "Responding to Globalization", Doorslaer et al.), which are also placed in an interdisciplinary framework and linked, for example, to the field of cultural diplomacy (Nye, Udovič, "Memoirism Hype" and "Danke Deutschland!", Udovič et al.).

The fourteen contributions in this year's *Acta Neophilologica* offer a cross-section of research from recent years and provide a diverse range of insights into the research work of the programme group, which also collaborates with other researchers in Slovenia and abroad who contribute to this issue. The scientific contributions are structured according to the topics listed above.

In the first contribution, **Igor Žunkovič** (University of Ljubljana) deals with the cognitive foundations of ethical literary studies. In today's societies, ethical questions have long since ceased to be limited to reflections in philosophy and theology, but are raised in all social subsystems, such as science, economics, politics, education, sports, the arts, and so on. Historically, literature has been an important medium for addressing ethical questions since its beginnings, from Sophocles and Aeschylus to Aristotle, who established ethics as a branch of philosophy (Lützeler). In certain approaches to literary theory, the ethical dimension is even a fundamental component of literature, alongside the aesthetic and cognitive (Kos). After the "ethical turn" in the field of ethical literary studies in the late 20th century (Davis and Womack), there has been not only a pluralism but also a "cacophony" of approaches (Virk) in the field of ethical literary studies. The field that deals with this topic is now referred to as ethical literary studies or ethical criticism. One of the less explored areas of ethical criticism is the relationship between ethics and cognitive aspects of reading. Therefore, Žunkovič's contribution analyses the neurobiological basis of reading and discusses the relationship between literature and ethics through the relationships with literary characters, narratives and implicit as well as real authors and readers. In contrast to Žunkovič's discussion, **Lilijana Burcar** (University of Ljubljana) focuses on a case study. Through an analysis of the socially engaged (proletarian) sonnets of Claude McKay (1890-1948), whose poetry raised the consciousness of the American (and English) proletariat in the struggle against racism and who also advocated universal social justice, the author shows how McKay's poetry leans on the traditional, highly aestheticized sonnet form and gives it a new ethical content and social orientation. Finally, in this first series of discussions, **Irena Samide** examines the relationship between humans and animals in two outstanding 19th century Austrian authors, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (1830-1916) and Ferdinand von Saar (1833-1906), and asks to what extent ethical aspects of animals can already be traced in late 19th century

literature. The article focuses on those stories in which the relationship between humans and dogs is central and tries to answer the question: Can we consider both authors as precursors of animal ethical literature, or are they still dominated by an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic approach?

The second series of contributions deals with literature in an intercultural situation, and the interactions and aspects of translating different texts from the source to the target culture. **Tamara Mikolič Južnič** (University of Ljubljana) and **Agnes Pisanski Peterlin** (University of Ljubljana) shed light on the question of hybridity in translation for the theatre. They note that surtitles are increasingly used in Slovenia to facilitate understanding of the content of a theatre play when it is performed for an international audience. However, the process of creating a translation in the form of surtitles is characterized by complexity and hybridity, as the translation of a theatre text, even if accessible, always needs to be adapted to a different medium. Even though surtitles are in many ways similar to television or film subtitles, research shows that theatre has its own specific characteristics, as the authors illustrate by comparing four different productions of the theatre play *Pavla nad prepadom* (*Pavla above the Precipice*). In the following article, **Florence Gacoin-Marks** (University of Ljubljana) presents the difficulties of translating multilingualism in Ahmadou Kourouma's postcolonial war novel *Allah n'est pas obligé* (*Allah Is Not Obligated*) and analyses how the Slovenian translator of the novel overcame the difficulties and to what extent she succeeded in translating the linguistic diversity of Ahmadou Kourouma's novel into Slovenian. **Marija Zlatnar Moe** (University of Ljubljana) analyses Slovenian translations of Ibsen's play *Et dukkehjem* (*Nora (A Doll's House)*), which is one of the central works of world theatre and literature, but also a text written by an author from a relatively peripheral culture and in a peripheral language. In this paper, the author shows how the fact that the translation was between two peripheral languages, Norwegian and Slovenian, influenced the translation process and all five translations of the play, both directly and indirectly. Among the contributions dealing with the analysis of individual literary works in an intercultural context is one by **Tomaž Onič** (University of Maribor) entitled *Witchcraft or Otherness: An English-Slovene Contrastive Analysis of Tituba's Speech*. Tituba, a supporting character in Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*, can be associated with the concept of otherness in several ways. These include her skin colour and language, which, along with the fact that she is a woman, seem to be the main reasons why she is the first person in Salem to be accused of witchcraft. The paper focuses on Tituba's speech, mainly from a translation point of view, and a contrastive analysis of her speech shows the possibilities and difficulties of translating her words into Slovenian. The next two contributions deal with translations of Ukrainian literature into German. **Maria Ivanytska** (University of Tübingen/Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv) presents the image of Ukrainian literature in West Germany that is created

in readers' minds through translations and outlines the imagological role of translations in the literary system. The author takes a close look at Anna-Halya Gorbach's (1924-2011) translations from Ukrainian into German and contextualizes them on the basis of the translator's biography and in the light of the broader context of her translation work. Multilingualism in Ukrainian literature is also the subject of **Claudia Dathe** (European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)), who analyses the German translations of three novels by Sofia Yablonska (1907-1971) and Haska Shyyan (1980), highlighting different perspectives of observation and reflection. With the help of the translations into German, she tries to approach the perspective of the target reader and finds that the conditions for understanding and receiving Ukrainian texts in other languages and cultural spaces can be very different.

The thematic part of *Acta Neophilologica* is rounded off by intercultural literary and literary-historical contributions. **Marija Javor Briški** (University of Ljubljana) takes us back to the time of Wolfram von Eschenbach (c. 1170-c. 1220) and compares two of his works by means of a comparative analysis, focusing on the forms and functions of the narrator's voice and the speech of the characters. The second contribution by **Anamarija Šporčič** (University of Ljubljana) takes the reader back to the time of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) and introduces the utopian discourse of metamodernism, while **Vesna Kondrič Horvat** (University of Maribor) discusses the short stories of the Swiss writer Adolf Muschg (1934). **Mineja Krisper** (University of Ljubljana) and **Petra Kramberger** (University of Ljubljana) outline and analyse the reception of the works of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) in Slovenia until 1860 based on a review of publications in German and Slovenian newspapers. The contributions of the members of the programme group Intercultural Literary Studies conclude with a discussion by **Tone Smolej** (University of Ljubljana) and **Tanja Žigon** (University of Ljubljana), who reconstruct the reception of the comic genres of the German dramatist, writer and librettist August von Kotzebue (1761-1819) on the stage of the German theatre in Ljubljana in the 1830s on the basis of archival sources that have been little or unknown up to now. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the German theatre was also frequented by the Slovenian intelligentsia, who refined their taste in theatre here and certainly projected it later onto performances in Slovenian.

Reading literatures in intercultural contact broadens the range of interpretations of literary works and critical and theoretical approaches to them, since the reading takes place in a different cultural environment or through the prism of a different cultural consciousness and language. In addition, detailed knowledge of the main guidelines of the (intercultural) reception of foreign literatures makes an important contribution to the knowledge of one's own cultural particularities and language, as well as the direction and dynamics of their development and transformation, and brings new insights in the field of intercultural contacts and understanding of

otherness. It also provides insights into the specificity of Slovenian literature, and at the same time contributes to its integration into the European and global space. The results of the research conducted within the framework of the Intercultural Literary Studies research programme are therefore important for strengthening mutual understanding between different languages and cultures in a globalized world that is increasingly shaken by political instability and crises of all kinds.

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