

Transculturalism and narratives of literary history in East-Central Europe

MAGDALENA ROGUSKA-NÉMETH – ZOLTÁN NÉMETH

In the field of literary studies over the last few decades, a well-defined theoretical basis has been formed by those tendencies which are related to the interpretation of literary texts along the phenomena of cultural hybridity and nomadism, globalism, heterotopia, extraterritoriality, translocality, translanguaging, bi- and multilingualism, deterritorialization, and border crossing. As Wolfgang Iser points out, due to the effects of globalization, the present cultures can no longer be interpreted as a homogeneous entity; they are connected like a network, existing in a state of hybridity and permeation, which is why they can be called transcultural, as their status goes beyond national cultures. Arianna Dagnino draws attention to the fact that in the wake of migratory flows and the development of digital communication technologies, physical and virtual mobility has become a common trope in contemporary societies, which exist in a state of super-diversity.

We do not think, however, that the above state is only a new phenomenon in a globalized world. This view is reinforced by the fact that the concept of transculturalism was coined in the 1940s by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, as well as by the awareness that the specific transcultural conditions of the East-Central European region had a significant impact on the culture and literature of the peoples living there. Related to this is Anders Pettersson's argument that in addition to traditional literary histories that stop at the borders of national literatures, it is important to write transcultural literary histories. Most recently, independently but concurrently, the Hungarian scholar Beáta Thomka and research groups in Nitra (Slovakia) and the Czech Republic have raised the question of how to write a history of transcultural literature.

This issue of WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES thus contains studies that examine literary and literary historical narratives from the perspective of the phenomena and networks of transculturalism in East-Central Europe. It deals with the challenges faced by transcultural phenomena and analyzes their presence or absence in literary histories of the region. The possibilities of canonization of bilingual authors and transcultural literary works are also important starting points for interpretations in East-Central European literary histories. The relationship between transculturalism and the canon is a similarly important trend in the literary histories of East-Central Europe, with particular regard to the literature of ethnic and national minorities.

The presentation of world literature perspectives, the reinterpretation of the possibilities of homogeneous national literary histories, and the interpretation of the unstable position of transcultural authors are equally significant aspects.

Validating the criteria system of transculturalism offers new approaches in the field of traditional comparative, imagological, intercultural, and areal research. Linked to the realizations of intertextuality, Itamar Zohar's polysystem, and network theory, transcultural interpretations are attracted to ambiguous and unclassifiable literary and linguistic phenomena, raising new perspectives on the 21st-century questions of literary history and the canon. Furthermore, the studies presented in the issue reevaluate the genre of national literary history inherited from the 19th century, in that instead of homogenous national perspectives, they highlight transnational perspective systems. We hope that the issue will contribute to develop the kind of approach that mobilizes more diversified perspectives in the writing of national literary history in East-Central Europe.