

# Comparativism in Slovenia: Introduction

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From its very beginning, the Slovene literary culture has been oriented towards the European, or, in the last decades, the world literary field. This holds true for literary production itself as well as for literary studies. Slovene literature has always been strongly tied to the international literary periods, currents, movements, being in a constant productive dialogue with them. Consequently, beside the national literary history, quite soon the discipline of Comparative literature emerged, and Anton Oc-virk's *The Theory of Comparative Literary History* (1936) appeared as the third monograph on Comparative literature worldwide.

In the earlier period, the main task of Slovene CompLit was to install the Slovene literature into the broader context of the world literature, particularly European. In pursuing this aim, several monographs on major Slovene writers or important literary periods emerged, illuminating the complex intertextual and intercultural intertwine-ment of Slovene and European literary spaces. In addition, a detailed study of maste-rpieces of World literature was encouraged, resulting in many very valuable, mono-graph-length interpretations. All these efforts culminated in Janko Kos' momentous *Comparative History of Slovene Literature* (1987).

From the 80's on, the focus gradually shifted from the Euro-centric perspective to the world literature proper. Scientists of younger generations broadened the range of Slovene comparativism on the one side by exploring poststructuralist, postcolonial-ist, new-historicist, gender etc. theories, and on the other by studying (beside Euro-pean and North American) also South American, Asian, Middle – Eastern, and Afri-can literatures.

In the following short “Slovene section”, articles of representatives of three dif-ferent generations of Slovene comparatists are presented. Janez Vrečko's study *Oedi-pus and Joseph K.* appertains to the “classical tradition” of Slovene CompLit. The comparison of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Kafka's *The Trial* has its implicit method-ological grounding in a variety of interpretative approaches, such as archetypical, mythological, thematological, philosophical, reception (particularly Jauß') criti-cisms. Similarly to a very fine conclusion of J. L. Borges' *Kafka and His Precursors*, namely that each author creates his own predecessors, Vrečko concludes that the reading of Kafka's famous novel may help us to understand *Oedipus Rex* in a new way.

Some major “classical” representatives of Slovene CompLit, such as Janko Kos

and Dušan Pirjevec (both based in phenomenological criticism), have been largely engaged with the genre theory, particularly with the novel. The article of Tomo Virk *The Short Story as a Genre of Ontological Uncertainty* appertains to this tradition. With the support of phenomenological, historicist, and pragmatic approaches, it aims to demonstrate that the term “short story”, applied in Anglo – American literary criticism to denote the entire variety of short fiction, neglects the differences between many subgenres of short story that for their part display various — in György Lukács’ terms — “Formwillen”.

The article of a comparatist of the younger generation, Vanesa Matajc, *The Historical Novel, Ideology and Re – organization of the Semiosphere: The Case of the Slovene Historical Novel*, is based on poststructuralist and (Lotman’s) semiotic approaches. It deals with the modifications which the Slovene historical novel went through after 1990, when significant political changes occurred (Slovenia gained independence, and the parliamentary democracy was established). In the theoretically well – grounded discussion the author demonstrates how these modifications were influenced simultaneously by theoretical and political shifts.