

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

Thank you - truly. And let me thank our hosts here at the University of Leeds, especially to Richard Hibbitt, for the warmth of the welcome and for the room in which to gather. It is a particular pleasure to receive this in a great civic university of the English north, a place with its own confident, independent-minded relationship to the supposed centres of things. As you will hear in a moment, I can imagine no more fitting a room in which to say what I should like to say.

Let me say, too, that an award with the word *collaborative* in its title is the only kind I would really want to accept, because whatever I am holding this evening was made by many hands, in many languages, and I am simply the one fortunate enough to be standing here to say so on behalf of the GLORC Research Group.

I would like to use my three minutes to worry, cheerfully, about a single word, a word that has become one of the great rallying cries of our discipline: *global*. For a good while now comparative literature has wanted to be *truly global*, and rightly so. It has worked hard, and honourably, to step outside the Eurocentric wheel it turned in for so long, to stop mistaking one small corner of the world for the whole of it. That is a real achievement, and I would not undo a line of it.

And yet, here is the cheerful worry: *global* has a mischievous habit. When the map suddenly widens to take in every continent, it is not only the distant peripheries that swim into view; sometimes the near ones quietly slip out of it. The European communities that were already faint on the old map - the small languages, the in-between regions, the cultures that were never quite major enough for the old canon and never quite *exotic* enough for the new global one - can find themselves, in the very rush towards worldliness, more invisible than before. Southeast and Central Europe has long been remarkably good at being overlooked in exactly this way: too European to count as the Other, too peripheral to count as the centre

So what moves me about this award is not only that it honours a piece of work, but that it turns the light, for a moment, back onto a part of the world that has in

fact been thinking comparatively for a very long time, and doing so, very often, precisely from the seams and the cracks between empires. The *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* at the heart of our project was, after all, the first journal of comparative literature anywhere; and it appeared not in Paris or Berlin but in a small Transylvanian university town crossed by three or four languages at once. It may be one of its truest beginnings and it is thrilling to watch it come back into focus.

Because that, I think, is what a genuinely global comparatism ought to feel like: not a wider centre, but no fixed centre at all; a conversation in which the small and the in-between are not tolerated guests but full interlocutors with as much to say about the future of the field as about its past. For giving that conversation a little more room this evening, and for the lovely reminder that global must always keep space in it for the near as well as the far - thank you, warmly, all of you.