

FOREWORD

The “Journal of Comparative Studies” is a scholarly forum covering a wide range of topics. It aims to promote a broad conception of cultural studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences and involves scholars from academic communities worldwide applying a comparative methodology.

This volume of the journal is presented in two parts.

The first more voluminous part, consisting of six articles, focuses on the subject of Western Esotericism and the East; the majority of them grew out of presentations given at the 5th International Conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism on April 16–18, 2015, organized by the Latvian Society for the Study of Religions in collaboration with Daugavpils University and the University of Latvia in Riga. The presented ideas and findings in the shape of the revised and expanded versions of the contributions were included in the special issue as a result of collaboration with the guest editors, Professor Birgit Menzel from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany) and Professor Anita Stasulane from Daugavpils University (Latvia).

Two articles on literary and cultural studies included in this volume were presented at the International Academic Conference “Human: Language, Society, Culture” on November 22, 2021, organized by the Society “Cultural Artefact” in cooperation with the Daugavpils University Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences Centre for Cultural Research.

The work on the current issue was very challenging. It differed from the previous experience not only due to the themes covered in the articles and participation in a new (collaboration) team of co-editors, but also, and mainly, due to finding ourselves in the so-called “non-war” [read: war] situation that elicited such powerful emotions as sadness, anger, fear, grief, anxiety, and despair. In parallel with grasping lost opportunities and dashed hopes marked by the boundary line of February 24, 2022, the world was attempting both to understand historical events by attaching them to worldviews, social struc-

tures, and values and to overcome the circulating belief that painful events become non-existent if they are neglected. Initial wondering about how a full-scale war in Europe can be possible in our century was rather promptly substituted by the awareness of not only significant global political and socio-economic changes but decisive cultural shifts. In the future, the latter will require even more rigorous studies on understanding culture in all its complex forms and expressions and of the social and political contexts, in which culture manifests itself.

Editors