Dear Readers,

The issue in your hands is dedicated to the centennial of the publication of Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića [The Strange Adventures of Hlapich the Apprentice], the most important children’s novel of Croatian children’s literature. The logo of the celebrations titled Hlapić 2013 on the pages of this issue indicates that Libri & Liberi joins all those who have been involved in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Hlapich the Apprentice led by the Croatian Association of Researchers in Children’s Literature during 2013. Over two hundred activities took place, from an international research conference to many workshops, exhibitions and performances, all in honour of this Croatian and international children’s classic. The celebrations are described in more detail by Ivana Faletar Horvatić in the Events section.

The Studies section wholly focuses on Hlapich the Apprentice. Hans-Heino Ewers explains the intellectual position of this novel in the context of European children’s literature at the beginning of the 20th century. This inspiring essay was also presented on the occasion of the central celebration of the 100th anniversary of the novel and the opening of the International Research Conference From the Strange to the Wondrous in April 2013, introducing most suitably the discussions that followed. In an equally appropriate way, by mapping both the historical and the present day intellectual territory of the novel and its international context, the essay introduces other papers which approach Hlapich from different perspectives. Their authors reveal its many facets and mark directions for future research. Thus, Željka Flegar in her paper “The Great Literary Improvisers” analyses Hlapich from the point of view of the improvisational theatre, and considers it together with other masterpieces of the Golden Age of children’s literature. The author shows that these works, including Hlapich, owe much of their constancy, universality and adaptability precisely to the creative improvisatory processes that are manifested in them. Martin Machata focuses on “The Translation and Translating of Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića into Slovak”. In addition to a detailed analysis of the 1940 Slovak translation as an intercultural meeting space of two seemingly distant cultures and languages, the author provides a well-argued explanation of the context and reasons for its appearance during the Second World War. He also raises the question of the obsolescence of this more than seventy-year-old translation and of the need for it to be revised so that it can again attract interest for Hlapich among Slovak readers. The next two studies focus on analyses of the novel itself, the first on the thematic aspects, and the second on the issues of language and style. Vladimira Rezo defines Hlapich the Apprentice as a road novel and as a space-orientated novel and analyses the notions of place and space as presented in the narrative, in search of spatial points of reference which establish the foundations of the narrative space.
as house and road, as well as specific places like threshold or crossroads, fair and circus, come to the fore. The author concludes that the interlacing of the static and dynamic perspectives contributes to the universality of the novel, and also that the novel as a whole opens up towards a plurality of interpretations. Jelena Vignjević analyses the linguistic and stylistic traits of the manuscript in comparison with the first printing of the novel, and finds numerous changes in the published version, which spoiled the writer’s initial intentions and altered specific stylistic and semantic elements of the original text. The author of the study explains the reasons for the modifications found in the first printing of *Hlapich the Apprentice* in the historical linguistic-political context in Croatia at the beginning of the 20th century. The Studies section concludes with “The Asian Journey of *Hlapich the Apprentice* on the Wings of Esperanto”, a paper by Spomenka Štimec describing the circumstances which turned the 1998 translation of *Hlapich the Apprentice* in Esperanto into a relay translation, rendering new editions of the novel in several Asian languages. As a result, *Hlapich* is today read in Japanese, Chinese, Persian, Bengali, Vietnamese and Korean. The novel has become well known and accepted in cultures in which these languages are spoken, and there has consequently been growing interest for *Hlapich* in the international community.

The Fact File section also brings materials related to *Hlapich the Apprentice*. Berislav Majhut and Sanja Lovrić Kralj have carefully edited and prepared for publication the letters from Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić’s correspondence, photographs, notes and other materials related to the novel and to its theatrical adaptation first performed in 1934. These items and letters in a special and rather unique way shed light on the everyday life of the great writer, on her endeavours to appropriately present her work, and on her wishes for the novel to remain permanently engaging and admired reading for children. They also reveal the author’s tender bond with her novel, the care of the whole family and close relatives for its fate, despite their engagement in state affairs or their everyday ordeals. They document appreciation for the novel and the support of many distinguished persons and notable cultural workers, contemporaries who well understood its importance. We cannot know if the author, towards the end of her life, still believed in the dazzling path *Hlapich* was to take, but she would certainly have been pleased that a hundred years after its creation, this short and exciting, wise piece has the same power to attract new readers, and that it continues to inspire literary scholars to strive to explain the reasons for its (perhaps never fully explicable) vitality and enduring value.

The studies and other materials in this issue of *Libri & Liberi* contribute to this permanent and unfinished search for an understanding of the secret of *Hlapich*, which is, in its own way and at the same time, a search for an understanding of the essence of children’s literature at its best.

*Smiljana Narančić Kovač*