

The Study of Hungarian Culture as Comparative Central European Cultural Studies

Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvári. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2011. 11-33.

Abstract

In their article, "The Study of Hungarian Culture as Comparative Central European Cultural Studies," Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvári outline a theoretical and methodological approach for the study of Hungarian culture as based on tenets of comparative Central European cultural studies, itself a framework developed from comparative cultural studies. Starting with a brief overview of cultural studies, Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári discuss the framework of comparative cultural studies, as well as aspects of Hungarian studies. The article is intended to promote the framework of (comparative) cultural studies, hitherto rarely applied in scholarship in Central and East Europe in general or in Hungary in particular, although since the early 2000s such studies are increasing. Among others, Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári postulate is that the various cultures of Central and East Europe are best studied in a comparative and contextual manner instead of a nation-based approach.

An introduction to cultural studies

As we discuss in the section below, "Comparative Hungarian cultural studies as comparative Central European cultural studies," cultural studies in Central and East European scholarship in general and in Hungarian scholarship in particular has not acquired widespread interest for a number of reasons, unlike in the Anglophone world or in the landscape of scholarship in general. Hence—while there is ample material as to what cultural studies offers to and produces in humanities and social sciences scholarship—we introduce the field in a summary manner, followed by an introduction to the field of "comparative cultural studies," its application in the study of Central and East European cultures with a focus on Hungary, and a section on taxonomy in comparative cultural studies as applied in comparative Central and East European studies.

Cultural studies is practiced as a hybrid field of scholarship, that is, one not located in a specific and established discipline but grounded in critical humanities and social sciences theories which, instead of any unifying disciplinary theory and methodology of its own, embraces a broad range of theoretical approaches and methodologies. In contrast to traditional disciplines, the strength of cultural studies resides precisely in its theoretical heterogeneity, richness, plurality, and flexibility of borders. It aims to reconfigure the boundaries of humanities and social sciences scholarship around new paradigms in theory and in application. Because of its diversity of methods, cultural studies can perhaps be best defined as a tendency across disciplines rather than as a unitary discipline. It can also be described as inter-, multi-, and even counter- or anti-disciplinary, taking its agenda and mode of analysis from shared concerns and methods, (re)combining numerous traditional and new disciplines to effect the critical study of cultural phenomena in various societies, always with an emphasis on the cultural and social context and with an aim of understanding the metamorphosis of the notion of culture itself. Rather than privileging canonical works or quantitative data and reproducing established lines of authority, cultural studies includes work on culture and culture products aiming to articulate the unsaid, the suppressed, and the concealed by dominant modes of knowing, not only of texts and signifying practices but also of theories in traditional disciplines. At its best, cultural studies is a cultural critique that extols the virtues of eclecticism and embraces a holistic and democratic view of culture through a spectrum of theoretical approaches and methodologies, seeking to make explicit connections between various cultural forms and between culture and society and politics, with the aim not merely to be analytical but to promote change. Cultural studies is always potentially controversial, with at least in its origins claiming for itself a radical political commitment and a practice of social change. Thus, unlike traditional philological scholarship that strives to be "objective," cultural studies is explicitly ideological. Although in some of its later versions cultural studies has become less avowedly political, it continues to represent a challenge both to the atrophied elitism of traditional academic disciplines and to hegemonic power structures more broadly. The term "culture" in cultural studies refers to an anthropological and narrative conception of the term to study ordinary features of life, while it aims simultaneously to dismantle the aesthetic-textual and hierarchical conception of culture. At the same time this means also that cultural studies can be applied to the study of the traditional, the canonical, and the hegemonic. Cultural studies can produce more relevant knowledge than established scholarly discourses in its readiness to address everyday life, in, for example, the study of marginalized and popular cultures or in investigating culture and media interest in the creative role of its audience (see Bathrick; Berubé; Franco; Grossberg; Hall; McNeil; Miller).

Cultural studies can draw on or be worked into a large number of established disciplines in the humanities and social sciences including literary studies and literary theory, the sociology of culture, social theory, media studies, communication studies, cultural anthropology, cultural history or geography, ethnography, sociolin-

guistics, translation studies, folklore, philosophy, law, cultural policy studies, pedagogy, history, museum studies, audience studies, art history and criticism, political science, and gender studies. In the area of thematics, too, cultural studies can be applied to such disciplines as gender and sexuality, nationhood and national identity, colonialism and postcolonialism, race and ethnicity, popular culture, the formation of social subjectivities, consumer culture, science and ecology, identity politics, the politics of aesthetics and disciplinarity, cultural institutions, discourse and textuality, (sub)cultures in various societies, popular culture and its audience, (global) culture in a postmodern age, the politics of aesthetics, culture and its institutions, language, cultural politics of the city, science, culture and the ecosystems, postcolonial studies, feminist studies, ethnic studies, (im)migration studies, urban studies, and publishing.

With regard to its background in thought and institutional presence, cultural studies began in Britain in the 1950s with Marxist-based critical analysis of culture by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Edward P. Thompson, Stuart Hall, and others in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. The Centre issued a series of influential politically engaged studies, some later combined into books, on mass media and popular culture. The earliest publications questioned literary production of what had come to be canonized as "English literature" and the influence of the cultural industry on the masses, and proposed that popular and working-class productions and their audience were worthy of study. British cultural studies underwent exportation by the move of expatriate Britons pushed out under the Thatcher government who obtained faculty positions in the US and other Anglophone countries. Thus the most widespread success of cultural studies has naturally been in the English-speaking world, with British, North American (US and Canada), and Australian and New Zealand cultural studies (see, e.g., Turner; Frow and Morris; Prow; McNaughton and Newton). A parallel school of thought evolved in Germany with the Marxist critical analysis-based Frankfurt school, with the difference that while the Birmingham school studied popular culture, the Frankfurt school argued for the importance of high culture and against the impact of popular culture and was based mostly in antipositivist sociology, psychology, and existential philosophy (e.g., Theodor W. Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Leo Löwenthal, and Herbert Marcuse). A further framework for the study of culture is *Kulturwissenschaft*—a framework developed since the 1920s in Germany and in many aspects rooted in nineteenth-century thought—based on the fields of philosophy of culture (e.g., Georg Simmel and Ernst Cassirer), history of culture (e.g., Wilhelm Dilthey), historical and philosophical anthropology (e.g., Johann Friedrich Blumenbach), sociology (e.g., Max Weber), and history of art (e.g., Aby Warburg). While since the 1980s *Kulturwissenschaft* has adopted some aspects of cultural studies, it remains a specific field and discipline rooted in German historical and philosophical thought, and in its history and current practice remains different from cultural studies (see, e.g., Böhme and Scherpe; Böhme, Matussek, Müller; Kittler).

Cultural studies has continued to undergo significant fragmentation and development in areas such as globalization, the critical analysis of race, ethnographic

field work, and gender studies, among others. It should also be noted that many aspects and perspectives of cultural studies have been available and exist(ed) in the discipline of comparative literature where many of cultural studies' themes and topics have been studied before the rise of cultural studies and continue to happen today (on this, see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "The New Humanities"). In the US, in addition to the field's prominence in departments of English, it has also been welcomed increasingly in departments of history, sociology, anthropology, and other fields of the humanities and social sciences. Cultural studies has also had influence in Southeast Asia, particularly in Taiwan and South Korea, where many of its practitioners returned after having studied in Anglophone countries. Chinese cultural studies disassociates itself from nationalistic and political implications, favoring "Chineseness" (including overseas Chinese) as a cultural rather than ethnic, national, or political reference point, a kind of "Chinese culturalism" that attempts to transcend geopolitical borders (see Zhang; Cheng, Wang, and Tötösy de Zepetnek). The influence of cultural studies world wide is partly owing to the hegemony of English and its status as the world's lingua franca today, US-American hegemony, and the spread of popular culture which, in turn, gave the initial impetus in the US to develop the Birmingham School's theoretical foci and apply them in and for the study of US-American culture.

With regard to cultural studies in European scholarship, Paul Moore suggests that the critique of received cultural worth is hindered by Eurocentrism, the (nostalgic) belief that Europe is the repository of "high" culture, a conservative defense which then becomes a critical value in European self-enunciation. Similarly, Roman Horak identifies the same prejudice against cultural studies and popular culture in Germany and Austria specifically, as well as the impact of the Frankfurt School, among other factors, along with the fear and disdain for the popular linked closely to a fear of US-American culture and the threat of Americanization. Yet, the impact of cultural studies is apparent (although most publications in cultural studies appear in the US, Canada, or Australia, and this is the case with articles in volumes published by Oxford University Press on Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Russian cultural studies whose authors work on the other side of the Atlantic, each of which opens with an introduction that set out the breadth of the task involved in developing an identifiable cultural studies dimension within the established cultural histories and traditions in the scholarship of the various nations (see, e.g., Graham and Labanyi; Forgacs and Lumley; Forbes and Kelly; Kelly and Shepherd; Kennedy; Dombroski and Cervigni; Le Hir and Strand; Reynolds and Kidd; Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas; Parati and Lauton; and Tamburri). Of interest is that in European scholarship it is in France—in addition to Central and East Europe as we explain below—where cultural studies has acquired the least interest (see, e.g., Chalard-Fillaudeau).

Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding, in the introduction to their collected volume *Cultural Studies in Question*, critique the failure to deal empirically with the structural changes in national and global political, economic, and media systems after the collapse of the former Soviet empire, the consequences of globalization,

and the process of democratization (interestingly, this view is parallel to Tötösy de Zepetnek's framework and methodology—the "contextual" and the "empirical"—in comparative cultural studies, see below). In the same volume, John D.H. Downing proposes to examine the capacity of cultural studies to illuminate the economic, political, and cultural transitions in Central and East Europe and in Russia and, conversely, to investigate the implications of those transitions as being a major test for scholars for the evaluation of the utility of cultural studies. He underlines the necessity for scholarship to integrate society and power, conflict and change into the analysis of communication and, in particular, to acknowledge the power of other agents than the elite ones, that is, the role that popular culture has played in bringing about internal pressure for political change. Dowling also argues that South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, and Latin America, as well as Southern Europe, which have undergone some analogous transitions, might offer terms of comparison. In a volume entitled *Cultural Discourse in Taiwan*, the editors comment that Taiwan—owing to its colonial past and diversity of cultural heritage—"represents the dynamics of cultural processes where East and West meet in a specific and extraordinary locus" (Cheng, Wang, and Tötösy de Zepetnek 1). With regard to South Korea, Myungkoo Kang examines the situation of cultural studies, and her analysis suggests parallels which would be applicable—similar to Taiwan cultural studies—to the study of Central and East European cultures. She outlines how South Korea has adopted, appropriated, and utilized Western theories of cultural studies beginning in the 1980s and underlines the need for a cultural studies in the twenty-first century. She also describes how cultural studies in Taiwan, which has begun to be institutionalized since 1993, has provided the Taiwan democratic movement with a theoretical foundation to carry out significant research on identity politics, minority and gender issues, and Japanese and US-American colonization, as well as relations between native Taiwanese and immigrants from mainland China. With regard to the situation of cultural studies in other parts of the world, one particular example is worth noting: Latin American comparative cultural studies, whose development has been consubstantial with a struggle for emancipation against the cultural hegemony of Europe and later of the United States, often focuses its agenda on issues similar to postcommunist Central and East Europe, such as the phenomenon of cultural penetration, censorship and self-censorship, and the symbolic manner in which popular resistance was expressed, the definition of national cultures, and analyses of discourses of power (see, e.g., McClennen and Fitz; Moreiras; Jordan and Morgan-Tomasunas).

Recent developments in cultural studies include attention to cognitive science, emotion, communication, media, and memory, as in Lisa Zunshine's collected volume *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies* or in Ben Highmore's *A Passion for Cultural Studies*. Cultural studies shows promising developments in both theoretical and applied work in digital humanities, a field whether with regard to the application of new media in publishing scholarship or research and work such as George P. Landow's *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization, Companion to Digital Humanities* (ed. Schreibman, Siemens, Unsworth), *Literary*

Education and Digital Learning (ed. Van Peer, Asimakopoulou, Bessis), and *Text and Genre in Reconstruction* (ed. McCarty) is convincing about the impact and urgent relevance of digitality in humanities scholarship.

From cultural studies to comparative cultural studies

Cultural studies, while innovative and an essential field in the humanities and social sciences, retains one drawback, and this is its monolingual construction, as it is a field developed and practiced in the Anglophone world by scholars who tend to work with two languages. Hence, the notion that what has been a trademark of comparative literature, namely, working in multiple languages, ought, ideally, to be carried over into "comparative cultural studies." Developed since the late 1980s by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, the conceptualization of comparative cultural studies is a merger of tenets of the discipline of comparative literature—minus the discipline's Eurocentrism and nation orientation—with those of cultural studies, including its explicit ideological perspective. Additional tenets of comparative cultural studies include attention paid to the "how" of cultural processes, following radical constructivism (see, e.g., Riegler; Schmidt; see also the journal *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>> and the print monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies, both published by Purdue University Press and the Shaker Press print monograph series of Books in Culture, Media, and Communication Studies). Hence, it is often not the cultural product as such, but its processes within the micro- and macro-systems which are interesting for the study of culture. To compare does not—and must not—imply hierarchy, that is, in a comparative and contextual analysis it is the method in use rather than the studied matter that is of importance. Attention to other cultures is a basic and founding element and factor of the framework of comparative cultural studies. This principle encourages an intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue, expressly ideological, and thus in this aspect identical with cultural studies. Dialogue is understood as inclusion, which extends to all Other, marginal, minority, and all that is considered peripheral. It is optimal for scholars working in the field of comparative cultural studies to have the working knowledge of several languages, disciplines, and cultures before moving on to the study of theory and methodology. Comparative cultural studies focuses on the study of culture both in parts (e.g., literature, film, popular culture, the visual arts, television, new media) and as a whole in relation to other forms of human expression and activity, as well as in relation to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Such an approach enables a thorough contextual cultural analysis. Comparative cultural studies focuses on English as the contemporary lingua franca of scholarship, communication, business, technology, and so on; however, the use of English in published scholarship does not mean European and US-American centrality. On the contrary, the broad use of English as an international language of scholarship allows scholars from outside the Anglophone world and continental Europe to present their works on an international forum and be understood by their

colleagues in other countries. Importantly, comparative cultural studies focuses on evidence-based research and analysis, for which a "contextual" (systemic and empirical) approach presents the most advantageous methodologies and framework (on this, see, e.g., Ferguson's and Golding's argument for the empirical, see above; see also Schmidt in particular). Comparative cultural studies insists on a theoretical approach and methodology involving interdisciplinary study with three main types of methodological precision: intra-disciplinarity (analysis and research within the disciplines in the humanities), multidisciplinary (analysis and research by one scholar employing any other discipline), and pluri-disciplinarity (analysis and research by teamwork with participants from several disciplines). In sum, comparative cultural studies is a global and inclusive discipline of global humanities and, as such, acts against the paradox of globalization versus localization. And last but not least, comparative cultural studies attempts to reverse the intellectual and institutional decline of the humanities and their marginalization, thus arguing towards the relevance of humanities and social sciences scholarship. A summary definition of comparative cultural studies is as follows:

Comparative cultural studies is the theoretical as well as methodological postulate to move and dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines. This is a crucial aspect of the framework, the approach as a whole, and its methodology. In other words, attention to other cultures—that is, the comparative perspective—is a basic and founding element and factor of the framework. The claim of emotional and intellectual primacy and subsequent institutional power of national cultures is untenable in this perspective. In sum, the built-in notions of exclusion and self-referentiality of single-culture study, and their result of rigidly defined disciplinary boundaries, are notions against which comparative cultural studies offers an alternative as well as a parallel field of study. This inclusion extends to all Other, all marginal, minority, border, and peripheral entities, and encompasses both form and substance. However, attention must be paid to the "how" of any inclusionary approach, attestation, methodology, and ideology so as not to repeat the mistakes of Eurocentrism and "universalization" from a "superior" Eurocentric point of view. Dialogue is the only solution. (Tötösy de Zepetnek, "From Comparative Literature" 259) (see also Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature*, "The New Humanities"; Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári; on further development of the concept including media and communication studies, see, e.g., Lisiak, *Urban Cultures*; López-Varela Azcárate and Tötösy de Zepetnek; Tötösy de Zepetnek and López-Varela Azcárate)

As suggested above, namely, that in current cultural studies digital humanities is considered an important development in both theory and application, comparative cultural studies includes attention to digital humanities as one of its principal tenets (see, e.g., Lisiak and Tötösy de Zepetnek; López-Varela Azcárate and Tötösy de Zepetnek; Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature*, "The 'Impact Factor,'" "The New Humanities," "New Media"; Tötösy de Zepetnek and López-Varela Azcárate). A further area of comparative cultural studies is translation studies, a still neglected field

on the landscape of scholarship in general (on this, see, e.g., Flotow; de Lotbinière Harwood; Simon; Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Taxonomy for the Study of Translation," "Towards a Taxonomy for the Study of Translation," "The *Systemic and Empirical*").

Comparative Hungarian cultural studies as comparative Central European cultural studies

On the landscape of scholarship in Central and East Europe in general and in Hungary in particular, cultural studies has acquired at best spotty interest. Our line of argumentation includes the postulate that Hungarian culture is best understood and studied in the context of Central European culture and not, as is performed more often than not, in a self-referential perspective. The postulate does not mean that text-immanent studies are not important or relevant; rather, the postulate is to argue for a comparative and contextual approach to Hungarian studies based on Central and East Europe's (cultural) history and culture. A related matter is the question as to why there is no association or organization between academic Hungarian studies programs and departments: there are a number of academic departments worldwide where Hungarian studies are established in various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, and while there are many institutional arrangements between departments or research institutes—as a rule between two such—there is no organized platform of contact encompassing locations of Hungarian studies transnationally. Today, with the possibilities of the internet, there ought to be an organization where scholars, language teachers, publishing companies, students, and those interested in Hungarian studies would be able to know about one another's work, interact, and exchange information. One attempt to coordinate Hungarian studies, including the application of new media, occurred in 2008 by Beatrice Töttössy—associate professor of Hungarian literature at the University of Firenze (sibling of this article's co-author)—who proposed a European network of Hungarian studies; however, the program does not appear to have been developed owing to the lack of funding (see Rózsa). Whether located in Hungary or elsewhere, such a network, organization, or association—a forum for Hungarian studies in a transnational context—would be a worthy undertaking responding to today's situation of globality as well as locality.

As to why post-1989 scholarship cultural studies as theorized and practiced either in the Birmingham school or its later incarnations in the wider Anglophone world has not found interest, we have a number of observations. Generally speaking, Central and East Europe—in part owing to its communist past and in part being at the periphery of the West and "in-between" the West and the East (i.e., the former Soviet empire and today's Russia and the third "space" of US-American culture [on this, see Lisiak, *Urban Cultures*])—evinces prejudices against cultural studies of both the Birmingham school and its later versions in the Anglophone world. The reasons for this include the shape of politics under communist rule and, since 1989, an often proclaimed opinion that US-American scholarship is not as sophisticated as European scholarship including such in Hungary (i.e., a standard Eurocentric at-

titude). A further reason for the lack of solid cultural studies-oriented work is that while the postgraduate education system has been restructured, including the implementation of a US-American-style Ph.D. system, many aspects of what is standard in the US-American system of higher education have not yet been implemented sufficiently and these lacunae include aspects of scholarly writing. A serious drawback in Hungary is the problem of resources, that is, accessibility to scholarship published abroad owing to the high cost of library subscriptions to journal databases (Muse, EBSCO, etc.), let alone the cost of purchasing new books, even as Hungary is part of the European Union since 2004 with concurrent funding for education from Brussels. Further, this situation is also tied to the fact that in Hungary after the fall of communism the professoriate—one that, similar to Germany, has undue power over students' progress, intellectual development, and employability—remained in place, unlike in the former East Germany after the reunification of the Germanies. In this environment, doctoral students depend on their professors' good will and thus have to tolerate their traditional views and old-fashioned scholarship. Because during the communist period the Hungarian professoriate had at best haphazard contacts with the West and limited resources (including limited levels of the knowledge of foreign languages) and because this professoriate remained in their positions, the importation and, more importantly, the practice of such fields as cultural studies is difficult. However, since the 1990s a good number of students received Ph.D.s in the Anglophone world and thus cultural studies is slowly penetrating the landscape of scholarship in Hungary (although many Ph.D. graduates end up with faculty positions abroad and not in Hungary). Another matter is the myth of the Hungarian who speaks several languages: today, the majority of students and faculty have a knowledge of languages in a bilingual configuration, that is, Hungarian as the native language and one other European language, but rarely two additional languages let alone three or more, and this situation has detrimental impacts on scholarship (the fact that this situation is similar to the landscape of scholarship in the US is neither here nor there; it is in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Nordic countries where multilinguality in scholarship exists while in Italy or France the situation is, again, similar to Hungary and the US and the situation is the same in other countries of Central and East Europe).

A further aspect of resistance towards cultural studies includes the notion of (post)coloniality in the study of Central and East European cultures. While, in general, Central and East European scholarship resists the idea of applying postcolonial theory to the study of the region's cultures, some scholars—including those working in Central and East Europe proper—adopted Tötösy de Zepetnek's concept of (post) colonial Central and East Europe and the notion of "in-between peripherality" from his and Sneja Gunew's 1995 collected journal volume *Postcolonial Literatures: Theory and Practice / Les Littératures post-coloniales. Théories et réalisations*, Tötösy de Zepetnek's 1998 book *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, his 1999 article "Configurations of Postcoloniality," and his 2002 article "Comparative Cultural Studies and the Study of Central European Culture" (for studies where the

concept is adopted, see, e.g., Andras; Deltcheva; Imre; Jefferies; Kehoe; Klobucka; Lefter; Lisiak, "Kulturoznawstwo porównawcze," *Urban Cultures*; Madejski; Rice; Scheibner; Schneider; Stephan; Vrečko; Novak, Pavlič; as well as in several articles in Tötösy de Zepetnek's and Louise O. Vasvári's edited volume *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies*, in articles published since 1999 in the journal *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, and in books and edited volumes published since 2002 in the Purdue University Press print monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies). David Chioni Moore's 2001 article "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?"—published in the US journal *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*—has made and is making some impact, likely because of the journal's worldwide distribution. It should be noted, however, that Chioni Moore states in his article incorrectly that the concept of postcoloniality has not been applied—at the time of the publication of the article in 2001—to post-Soviet cultures and countries: that is, research for the article did not extend to the above mentioned Tötösy de Zepetnek's and Gunew's 1995 collected journal volume *Postcolonial Literatures: Theory and Practice / Les Littératures post-coloniales. Théories et réalisations*, Tötösy de Zepetnek's 1998 book *Comparative Literature*, or his 1999 article, "Configurations of Postcoloniality" where the notion of postcoloniality have been applied in both a fully developed theoretical framework and in detailed application. Postcolonial theory is applied in a historical context to the region but excluding the post-1989 situation in the 2003 collected volume *Habsburg Postcolonial* (ed. Feichtinger, Prutsch, Csáky). In a volume relevant to our discussion here, László Kürti and Peter Skalník point out in the introduction to their 2009 edited volume, *Postsocialist Europe* that while no one would argue that the region would be still in transition, rather, it is in post-transition, and suggest that the question is to be raised is whether a democratic Central and East Europe does or does not actually exist after the collapse of the Soviet empire. They propose that it is imperative to address new questions, and, among others, propose that it would be elucidating to compare many aspects of postcolonial studies to postsocialist studies to show their similarities. However, similarly to Chioni Moore, they do not refer to studies where the application of postcolonial theory to post-1989 Central and East Europe has already been performed.

We are not suggesting that in post-1989 Hungarian scholarship there is no work done in some ways conceived as cultural studies; rather, what we contend is that it is rarely if ever avowedly so and not part of any coherent theoretical movement. At the same time, we should mention that in Hungarian scholarship there have been precursors of the basic tenets of (comparative) cultural studies, predating it, and containing conceptually similar tenets—we mean here frameworks which form the background bases of comparative cultural studies, that is, the *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft* school (Schmidt), the polysystem theory (Even-Zohar), the *sciences de l'écrit* school (Estivals, Meyriat, Richaudeau), or the concept of the *champ littéraire* (Bourdieu)—such as the work of Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz (see Damrosch; Marno) or that of Tivadar Thienemann and István Hajnal (see Kiséry). In a seminal

article published in 2004, József Takáts analyzes the situation of cultural studies within Hungarian-language scholarship, although it should be noted that he does so in relation to literary studies only: he refers to the work of scholars such as Mihály Szegedy-Maszák and Áron Kibédi Varga, who wrote about the cultural turn in the English-speaking world and, to a lesser degree on *Kulturwissenschaft* in Germany (a theoretical and applied construct different from and predating cultural studies); however, their writings had little reverberation. In Hungary cultural studies is normally performed as *kritikai kultúrakutatás* (critical study of culture) rather than *kultúratudományok* (cultural studies) and it is, indeed, in some ways similar to US-American cultural studies (see Sári). In concept and terminology, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák has used *művelődéstudomány* (the study of cultural education in the context of the German *Bildung*), perhaps seeking a term that combines cultural studies, German *Kulturwissenschaft*, and interart studies, the latter being a focus in his conceptualization (see "Merre tart az irodalom(tudomány)" ["Where is Literary(science) Headed?"]).

Takáts discusses Hungarian-language publications relevant to cultural studies such as special issues of the journal *Helikon*, as well as articles in the journal *Replica*, and he refers to Anna Wessely's collected volume *A kultúra szociológiája* (The Sociology of Culture; the volume contains translations of articles by cultural studies scholars Williams, Bourdieu, etc.), to Gábor Biczó's and Noémi Kiss's collected volume *Antropológia és irodalom* (Anthropology and Literature), and Ernő Kulcsár Szabó's and Péter Szirák's edited volume *Történelem, kultúra, medialitás. Irodalomtörténetírás, valamint a kultúra és médiatudomány lehetséges összefüggése* (History, Culture, Mediality: The Writing of Literary History and the Possibility of the Interrelationship of Cultural and Media Studies). With regard to the latter, Takáts points out that despite its title, there is little to no mention of cultural studies in the volume. Perhaps Sándor Bene's approach *összehasonlító kultúratudomány* (i.e., comparative cultural studies) comes closest to the framework of comparative cultural studies, although there is no evidence he works with tenets similar to those outlined above (in 2008 Tötösy de Zepetnek held an invited lecture at the Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where there was an extended discussion about cultural studies in general and in Hungary in particular, although it must be said that the audience did not hail from literary studies but from sociology; see Császi).

A recent development since the mid-2000s, however, is that the concept *kultúratudomány* is employed as a "grab bag" approach but without theoretical and methodological anchoring in either the Birmingham school or Anglophone cultural studies. Here, we point to selected examples of cultural studies-oriented scholarship which, in our view, are of theoretical and applied precision and in line with the best work in "cultural studies": the collected volume *Művészet és hatalom. A Kádár-korszak művészete* (Art and Power: Art during the Kádár Regime), edited Tamás Kisantal and Anna Menyhért; the volume *Szerep és közeg. Medialitás a magyar kultúratudományok 20. századi történetében* (Role and Medium: Mediality in the History of Twentieth-Century Hungarian Cultural Studies), edited by Szabolcs Oláh, Attila Simon, and Péter Szirák; and Györgyi Horváth's manuscript awaiting publica-

tion, *Irodalomtudomány és politika Kelet- és Nyugat-Európában. Összehasonlító elemzés a kultúratudományos fordulat hazai recepciójának sajátosságaiból kiindulva* (Literary Study and Politics in East and West Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Cultural Studies and Its Reception in Hungary).

For comparative Hungarian cultural studies, it is relevant to consider the nature of the cultural history of multiethnic and multilingual Hungary, including the geopolitical, ideological, and symbolic geographies of its border issues (on this, see also Jobbitt). In this context mention must be made of the work of András F. Balogh—which, because it is written in German and was published in Cluj (Romania), has not received adequate attention. Balogh deals with issues such as German-language literature and press in Hungary from the eighteenth century onward in southern Hungary (the Banat) with regard to texts written in Hungarian, German, and Romanian. He makes the point that the socialization in bi- and multilingualism these authors and their texts demonstrate—often doubly coded—cultural competence as translators and transmitters of culture, thus forming a link among their cultures. All this came to an end with World War I, which caused many to migrate westward for a variety of reasons, while World War II annihilated both the German-speaking province of Bukovina and the Holocaust the Jewish communities. If one examines these Hungarian and German intercultural works from the perspective of cultural studies today, it is evident that they have a common core and relevant literary as well as general culture-contextual value worthy of study and canonization.

The matter of Hungarian multi-ethnicity is part of the overarching issue of the construction of (imagined) history, nationalism, and the development of national identity through rewriting the past and a discourse of populism, with the fetishization of the myths and symbols which serve to reinforce it, including flags, maps, anniversaries, myths of redemption, the suffering of the nation, myths of military valor, the myth of divine descent of a nation and rebirth and renewal, myths of foundation, pre-occupations with ancient religions such as shamanism, rune writing, and folk music, all serving a number of standard and overlapping myths in Central and East Europe, including Hungary. While a mythical "Hungarianness" (*magyarság*) has been overvalored anew in post-1989 Hungarian culture and politics, there has been inadequate attention to other groups discounted from this "Hungarianness." In particular, there has traditionally been an inadequate overlap between Jewish studies and studies on Hungarian culture and history, with the latter failing to take into consideration issues relating to Hungarian Jews and the Holocaust. However, the last decade has produced a number of studies, looking back both at the historical role of Jews and post-1989 developments (on the Holocaust in Hungary and Central Europe, see, e.g., Braham and Chamberlain; Vasvári and Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Central European Holocaust Studies* and *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*).

The question of national and ethnic identities—whether in scholarship or in public discourse—is one of the most salient issues in Hungary since 1989. If ethnic identity and the accommodation and conflict in identity formation is of central importance in Hungarian nationalism (and in Central and East Europe in general),

it is the core preoccupation of studies on ethnic Hungarians outside of Hungary in the mapping of changing borders and the impact of the changes on culture, (im)migration, cultures of people in diaspora, and their cultural preservation and double-consciousness, (internal) exile, and, post-1989 the returning versus postsocialist diasporas, transnationalism, and transmigration. Of particular interest is the recent phenomenon of Chinese immigration to Hungary over the last fifteen years, immigrants who tend to consider themselves as a transnational global majority with China as their ethnic and cultural base, their attachment to China having nothing to do with territorial nationalism, but nevertheless with real issues for the integration of Chinese immigrants in Hungary. The issues of nationalist and ethnic identities and (im)migration and exile are centered both symbolically and actually in the politics of language, as well as in real-life issues of language retention, community bilingualism and diglossia, typological aspects of language change under conditions of language contact, and language loss (on aspects—theoretical and applied—of national identity and [im]migration in the context of border-crossing and [im]migration see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek and Wang; on the relationship between "culturalism," [im]migration, and ethnicity, see also Marsovszky; Eriksen and Stjernfelt; Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Ethnizität"). Yet, language, (socio)linguistics, and translation have not been treated as a vital aspect of the study of culture or literature in Hungary. In particular, the matters of populist nationalism and cultural essentialism and ethnic exclusion represent problematics which are in great need of scholarship both in Central Europe in general and in Hungary in particular, whether by scholars in Hungary or abroad. One area where scholarship about both Central Europe in general and Hungary in particular has been expanding is film studies, and in this field there are substantial studies published both in content and number (see, e.g., Imre; Hames and Portuges; Portuges).

About taxonomy in comparative cultural studies and comparative Central European studies

Taxonomy—following Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" and hence "naming"—represents an important aspect of comparative cultural studies, as well as of the framework's application in the study of Central and East European cultures. It is difficult and problematic to define the shifting conceptions and shifting borders of that symbolic geographical category called alternately and with an ongoing debate about nomenclature, Central Europe, East Central Europe, East-Central Europe, Eastern Europe, eastern Europe, and so on. Never an official designation of a political entity but often employed to contextualize and establish cultural, political, and ideological narratives, Central Europe is a historically loaded term that is no less and no more a political construction than the term Eastern Europe to designate the region's post-World War II situation. On one hand, "Central Europe" has been used stereotypically to highlight the supposed superior civilization of the older established cultures of the Western half of Europe from its more primitive "barbaric" periphery (see Suleiman). On the other hand,

the same term has been applied primarily to German and Austrian imperialist perspectives (the former "Central Powers"). In a neutral and historical sense, Central Europe can be loosely defined as a liminal historic and cultural region of, simultaneously, both a common heritage and great diversity in terms of nationality, religion, and some eleven languages (and multiple language families), thus the designation of "in-between peripheral" for the region and its cultures (see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Configurations of Postcoloniality," "Comparative Cultural Studies and the Study of Central European Culture," see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Gunew). At times the term denotes a geographic definition as the Danube region in the "heart" of the continent, including the language and culture areas which are today included in the states of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and usually also Austria and Germany (in particular *Mitteldeutschland*, i.e., the former East Germany) but never Russia or other areas of the former Soviet Union's regions to the Ural mountains, geographically the area of Europe). The newer designations of "East Central Europe" and "East-Central Europe" include present-day Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, countries that have become independent from the Soviet Union. Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer explain that they chose the somewhat vague designation "East-Central Europe" for their four-volume work as a less divisive term with fewer historical connotations than *Mittleuropa* or Central Europe (not identical with the historico-political concept of *Mittleuropa*) (2-7; on Cornis-Pope's and Neubauer's approach, see Guran). In *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies*—as in volumes published in the Purdue University Press monograph series of Comparative Cultural Studies and its affiliate learned journal *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>> with studies about the region—the term "Central and East Europe" or "Central Europe" is used as a taxonomical designation based on Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's conceptualization and location of the region and its cultures:

The designations of "Central Europe" and "Central European culture" are a matter of considerable controversy and debate . . . in my view there is a geo-political space called Central Europe that, consequently, contains a landscape of cultures comprising of real or imagined (i.e., Anderson's concept) and variable similarities of shared histories, cultural practices, institutions, social and behavioral similarities, etc. As a combination of geography, history, economics, cultures, politics, etc., Central European culture is a landscape of cultures of spaces ranging from Austria, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Western Ukraine, the former East Germany, and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, etc., thus including the Habsburg lands and spheres of influence, historically, of Austrian and German centers. While the region existed as a cultural space with specific characteristics before, with its some forty years of Soviet-Russian and communist history it has acquired additional and further characteristics of (post)coloniality. In the context of (post)colonial studies the postulates are that Central and East European cultures are peripheries of dominant European cultures such as the German and French. However, because of their indigenous cultural self-referentiality, Central European cultures are not only peripheral but also in-between, that is, in-between their own na-

tional and cultural self-referentiality and the cultural influence and primacy of the major Western cultures and economic and political centers they have been and continue to be influenced by. In addition, they are in a postcolonial situation following their historical experiences of Soviet and communist colonialism; the residues of these experiences remain significant elements of the region's cultural and artistic, as well as social expressions. (Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Comparative Cultural Studies and the Study of Central European Culture" 7-8; see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Gunew).

Further on taxonomy, the use of "Balkan" and "Balkans" is deemed counter-productive because of its negative connotations, and thus "South Europe" and "South European" is used. With regard to the US-American impact in the region, the matter of taxonomy of "American" is also relevant to the scholarship of Central and East European cultures: while in public discourse as well as scholarship the usage of "American" when referring to the US is standard, we postulate that this is hegemonial appropriation of the American continent to the US, hence, when referring to the US, the taxonomy is "US-American" (see, e.g., McClennen; this is also a tenet of comparative cultural studies in general), and our last taxonomical designation is that while there is no agreed spelling of "socialist," "communist," "fascist," or "nazi" in that these terms are at times capitalized at times not, all ought to be not capitalized and this taxonomical designation is followed.

Conclusion

The central perspective of our approach is that in the study of Hungarian culture—and of the cultures of Central and East Europe—the focus ought to be contextual and comparative (synchronically, as well as diachronically) in theory and application. With reference to Central and East European studies in particular, this is for the reason that scholarship focusing on the national remains with lacunae because of such study's self-referential perspective, thus tending to exclude rather than include. While Anglophone cultural studies is being applied increasingly by scholars in Central and East Europe, we postulate that comparative cultural studies and its application in Central and East European studies would offer an attractive framework to scholars in the region, owing to their multilingual capacities, in order to capitalize on knowledge directly and not through translation, as is often the case with scholars in the Anglophone world. Consequently, scholars working in Central and East European studies would be able to develop the framework further as an approach in an inclusive, multilingual, intertextual, interdisciplinary, and transnational perspective in theory and application. Surely, work with such an approach would be furthering knowledge in the humanities and social sciences in a socially relevant manner and at the same time producing in-depth scholarship.

Note

The authors thank National Sun Yat-sen university for partial funding of research for the above article.

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