

# TOWARD A COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES

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*Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek proposes in his article, "Toward a Comparative Cultural Studies" the developing of a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of culture and literature. He argues that the discipline of comparative literature has developed in its history many aspects of cultural studies which are considered innovative today. Thus, a combination of comparative literature and cultural studies into comparative cultural studies is introduced via a presentation of selected recent work in comparative literature and a ten-point draft proposal of how to do comparative cultural studies.*

*Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek predlaga v razpravi »K primerjalnim kulturnim študijam« razvitje teoretskega in metodološkega okvira za raziskovanje kulture in literature. Ugotavlja, da je primerjalna književnost v svoji zgodovini razvila mnoge vidike kulturnih študij, ki danes veljajo za inovativne. Razprava pomeni uvodni korak v kombinacijo primerjalne književnosti in kulturnih študij, in sicer s predstavitvijo izbora novejših del o primerjalni književnosti in predloga v desetih točkah, kako zasnovati primerjalne kulturne študije.*

Among comparatists and even among some scholars working in cultural studies, it is well known – although rarely acknowledged – that the discipline of comparative literature is rich in theory and practice of much of what cultural studies is about today. Areas of study such as popular culture or film and literature have a long history in comparative literature, for example. For a comparatist it is often irritating to find that approaches and subject areas in cultural studies purport to be innovative when in fact the same areas have been studied under similar terms in comparative literature. It is true, however, that cultural studies often presents new terminologies and rhetorical content and, importantly, that cultural studies has achieved both symbolic and financial value. In consequence I accept the currency of cultural studies and I am aware of the intellectual and

institutional difficulties comparative literature is experiencing. Thus, for political reasons but which are at the same time parallel to intellectual considerations, I intend to explore the viability of enriching and developing both fields of study, comparative literature and cultural studies. This theory construction involves the merger of comparative literature and cultural studies into a new approach I designate as "comparative cultural studies." In my discussion, I will begin with a description of some aspects of the current history and situation of comparative literature which I will then complete with a proposal for a framework of comparative cultural studies.

The history of comparative literature as a theoretical framework and as a methodology for the study of literature as well as the history of theories and methodologies within comparative literature in a truly international perspective is yet to be written. While there are many studies of the discipline within national borders – a good example is the recent collected volume edited by Tania Franco Carvalhal, *Comparative Literature World Wide: Issues and Methods* (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, 1997; with articles by Carvalhal, Gillespie, Souza-Miranda, Chevrel, Kushner, Cornea, Buescu, Behar, Szegedy-Maszák, Hyun, Palermo, Gorp and Neubauer, Siaflekis, Yue, Gual) or manuals such as the Italian volume edited by Armando Gnisci and Francesca Sinopoli, *Manuale storico di letteratura comparata* (Roma: Meltemi, 1997) that contains historical descriptions of the discipline in specific countries – a synthesized study of the history of the discipline that would cover the history of the discipline from a global and international perspective does not exist. In other words, curiously and unfortunately, apart from articles such as in the mentioned volume edited by Carvalhal and in scholarly journal articles and book chapters such as chapter two in the early volume by Ulrich Weisstein, *Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968), chapter one in Claudio Guillén's *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* (Cola Franzen, trans.; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), and chapter one, "Zu Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Komparatistik," in Peter V. Zima's *Komparatistik: Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Francke, 1992), or the recent chapter "La storia comparata della letteratura" by Franca Sinopoli in *Introduzione alla letteratura comparata* (Ed. Armando Gnisci. Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 1999), there exists no book-length synthesized description of the international and global history of the discipline. I should like to mention that there exist also dissertations on specific periods within the history of comparative literature where a more global view is attempted albeit in a strongly Eurocentric context, for example Peter Theodor Leithmann's *Moriz Carriere and the Development of Comparative Literature* (Vanderbilt University, 1977). For a list of histories of comparative literature, see Steven Tötösy, "Selected Bibliography of Studies on the Theories, Methods, and History of Comparative Literature (to 1999)" at <<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/clcwebjournal/clitbib1-99.html>>.

It is from the perspective to mediate the lack of the global and international perspective of the history of the discipline of comparative

literature that I will discuss more recent aspects of its history, here with regard to selected published works. That is, my point of departure is the recent situation of comparative literature wherefrom I begin to explore the viability of an approximation and methodological overlapping of comparative literature and cultural studies and how the two fields may present an innovative approach of study in the humanities in general and of culture including literature in particular.

In a compressed and global view, the following developments can be observed in comparative literature of the last ten to fifteen years: 1) The appropriation of theory by cultural studies and English and the consequent reduction of the area of activity by comparative literature, tied to the diminishing institutional stability of the discipline of comparative literature in the traditional centres of the discipline (USA and Europe); 2) The development of a "European" comparative literature; 3) The more recent development of comparative literature in "peripheral" countries such as Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Greece, Estonia, etc.; 4) The "Americanization" of comparative literature; and 5) The potential development of comparative literature (and culture) with the tools of new media and technology.

With regard to my second observation, the development of a European comparative literature, I take my point of departure with George Steiner. When Steiner gave his inaugural lecture as Lord Widenfeld Professor of European Comparative Literature at Oxford University in 1994, he presented a paper entitled "What is Comparative Literature?" (published as *What is Comparative Literature?* Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). First, Steiner described how "every act of reception of significant form in language, in art, in music, is comparative" (1) and he argued that "from their inception, literary studies and the arts of interpretation have been comparative" (3). True; especially today, after literary theory has become (almost) mainstream and in the era of cultural studies, this position is hard to refute. Steiner proceeds to say that "I take comparative literature to be, at best, an exact and exacting art of reading, a style of listening to oral and written acts of language which privileges certain components in these acts. Such components are not neglected in any mode of literary study, but they are, in comparative literature, privileged" (9). If I understand Steiner correctly, he is referring here to that traditional form of comparative literature where the knowledge of foreign languages for the scholar of comparative literature is an essential factor. Fair enough and I agree with him. He then outlines three specific areas which are essential features of the discipline in his opinion: 1) "It aims to elucidate the quiddity, the autonomous core of historical and present 'sense of the world' (Husserl's *Weltsinn*) in the language and to clarify, so far as is possible, the conditions, the strategies, the limits of reciprocal understanding and misunderstanding as between languages. In brief, comparative literature is an art of understanding centred in the eventuality and defeats of translation" (10), 2) the "primacy of the matter of translation in comparative literature relates directly to what I take to be the second focus" (11), and 3) "Thematic studies form a third 'centre of gravity' in

comparative literature" (13). Steiner's argument, clearly, hinges on the knowledge of foreign languages and on the matter of subject matter, that is, themes, which are universal in principle.

While I agree with him that this knowledge is an essential and basic aspect of the discipline, I find his argument seriously lacking. For, as we know, the knowledge of foreign languages is not necessarily a privilege of comparatists, i.e., there are many scholars in literary studies in English departments or in other national language departments who do speak and work with other languages. In my opinion, the distinctive feature of comparative literature is, or ought to be, the knowledge of foreign languages with an inclusionary ideology (the attention to *alterité*) tied to precise methodology (for an elaboration on this see my book, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*. Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998). Steiner does not mention methodology either explicitly or implicitly in his argumentation and thus his position is hardly defensible at the present situation of the discipline. The much discussed Charles Bernheimer volume of collected articles, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995; with articles by Appiah, Pratt, Riffaterre, Apter, Bernheimer, Brooks, Chow, Culler, Damosch, Fox-Genovese, Greene, Higounet, Lionnet, Perloff, Russo, Siebers, Weinstein), is similar. While most contributors to the volume argue for a political ideology of inclusion, they do not mention methodology either. And the question of methodology does not appear in most comparative literature textbooks or works of today either. Perhaps this is for the reason that comparative literature, either as the translation of literatures and cultures (as in a conceptual and ideological translation or/and as an actual translation) or as a cross-cultural inclusionary ideology and practice is assumed to be a methodology per se. While I accept this as a historical argument and as an essential characteristic in the same historical context, I propose that this is not enough to justify the discipline today. And the fact that the above approach is not enough to convince scholars today is evident, for instance, in an article entitled "Why Comparisons Are Odious" by the editor of *Critical Inquiry*, W.J.T. Mitchell, *World Literature Today*, *Comparative Literature: States of the Art* (70.2 [1996]: 321-24). Steiner's paper about comparative literature and that from an internationally reputed scholar whose work otherwise without doubt has been influential, manifests in some ways even a certain regression although in general he is on the same wave length as many of the contributors to the Bernheimer volume. To take another example, Hugo Dyserinck situated comparative literature a decade earlier, in 1985, in two major areas, "1. A comparative history of literature, involving the mutual relations, as well as the similarities and differences, between individual literatures" and "2. A comparative theory and methodology of literature, dealing with literary theories developed in individual countries (or linguistic areas) and with corresponding methods of literary criticism" (Hugo Dyserinck and Manfred S. Fischer, *Internationale Bibliographie zu Geschichte und Theorie der Komparatistik*. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1985. xvii). Thus, the second area is, at least in principle, closer to my own contention than in compa-

rative literature one ought state at all times a clearly and precisely described method which then is applied (Dyserinck's imagology has evolved since into a full-blown field of imagology: see Joep Leersens' imagology material and work at <http://www.hum.uva.nl/images>). I should like to mention, however, that Steiner's argumentation includes one area that corresponds to both Dyserinck's first area of comparative literature, literary history and to Susan Bassnett's or André Lefevere's proposal that the discipline may be saved by such areas of study as the study of translation (Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993; André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*. New York: MLA, 1992). In Steiner's proposal this is located in the "dissemination and reception of literary works across time and place" (11), further specified in the study of "who reads, who could read what and when?" (12). This area of scholarship, indeed, I find promising, especially when defined as the area of "sociology and history of reading and readership" I propose in my own work (see my *Comparative Literature*).

The notion of a European comparative literature (Steiner) begs a brief elaboration on the taxonomical level. As it stands, the designation of "European comparative literature" means the study and the discipline of comparative literature as performed in Europe. However, this is not necessarily what its practitioners actually mean: they mean, rather, the study of European literatures comparatively, that is, the study of literatures in the geographical and historical region of Europe. If and when this designation is meant, it should be "comparative European literature." And it is this latter designation that is prominent in French comparative literature (and a developing perspective of the European Union's bureaucrats for education and culture. Among the publications of recent years in France, in particular the edited volume of Béatrice Didier, *Précis de Littérature Européenne* (Paris: PU de Paris, 1998) and Didier Souiller and Wladimir Troubetzkoy's *Littérature comparée* propagate the said notion (Paris: PU de Paris, 1997) (For another recent example, see the web site *Euroliterature: Global Communication and the Future of Literary Studies* at <http://www.euroliterature.uib.no/>.)

The *Précis de Littérature Européenne* is divided into sections of methods, space, periods, and genres. In the first section, methods, the volume contains several articles discussing in various ways and from several points of view the notion of a the theory of comparative European literature and the topics range from the problematics of the study of European literature, the history of a European literature, the comparative history of myth in European literature, the question of European literature and social classes, European cultures and interdisciplinarity, the publishing history, libraries, and the reading of literature in Europe, and the history of the teaching of literature in Europe. As the editor of the volume, Béatrice Didier, announces and argues the volume is about comparative European literature. However, the definition of a European literature encompasses mainstream literatures and cultures (which I would call canonization one) and within the mainstream canonized texts

and authors (which I would call canonization two). There are a few articles in the volume which deal with marginal, minor, or peripheral literatures and cultures in Europe, such as Jiddish and Arabic and there are only two articles which argue "pour une littérature qui ne se limite pas à celle des 'langues courantes'" (Szávai) and for the "place des littératures régionales en Europe" (Barbe). The general tone of the articles emanates from a national approach to literatures and cultures and the notion that in a unified Europe each literature and culture becomes "regional" is untouched and implicitly rejected. The approach and tone in the Souiller and Troubetzkoy volume is similar. In other words, there is an implicit and at times explicit hierarchy in the approach, which then stretches also to method implicitly assumed. In other words, comparative literature is based on the premise of national literatures which then can be and should be compared to each other and that the comparisons rest on the canon of mainstream literatures and cultures as well as on the canon of specific authors writing in the mainstream languages and cultures. Granted, it is difficult to argue for a divorce of literature from national bases and it takes some work to do this: Souiller and Troubetzkoy and the contributors to the Didier volume offer studies where the focus on national literatures – compared or not – is mediated by attention to genres or themes, for instance. But overall both volumes are in a traditional mode of literary study and they do not take into account the newer developments of cultural studies, feminism, multiculturalism or any such. Perhaps the reason for this is the fact that most (although by no means all) theoretical and applied work in these areas emanate from the English-speaking world and North America? Such work as Margaret R. Higonnet's collected volume, *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994; with articles by Lionnet, Brodzki, Rajan, Metzger, Cullens, Vlasopolos, Higonnet, Hirsch, Miller, Gözl, Malti-Douglas, Gaard, Goodwin, Clark, Sniader Lanser, and Nnaemeka), is not referred to in either volumes. (This brings me to my observation: whether it is German or French oriented comparative literature, most work concentrates on "home-grown" sources, that is, in the case of French works on French sources and in the case of German works on German sources while North American works pay attention to at least mainstream French and German sources. It is precisely in comparative literature where the notion of "theory approximation" should be a given [see Tötösy, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* 215-20]; however, it is rarely so.)

In principle, I do not object to a comparative European literature if it constitutes method but I do object to it if it is implicitly and/or explicitly ideological and is based on perceived and traditional hierarchies which are in turn based on national literatures. At the same time there is the nagging question whether the territorial approach of "comparative European literature" is not yet again a closed approach similar to the national literatures approach except that it is a bit larger. On the other hand, in this case the frequent criticism of Eurocentrism (right or wrong) becomes immaterial as the perspective is, precisely, on Europe only. The approach

of a European comparative literature as suggested by Steiner (or, actually only implicitly by the designation of the chair he holds?) would be the alternative designation. It would have the drawback of old, namely that Europeans do comparative literature and that is it; that theirs is THE comparative literature. In other words, this approach would implicitly and explicitly draw Eurocentrism with itself and it would suggest an exclusionary perspective (a contradiction to the idea of comparative literature in itself). Worse, this European comparative literature would be based on mainstream national literatures only, as demonstrated by the two volumes I discussed above.

Next, I would like to return to my observation I already made previously: It is of some interest from several points of view, such as the sociology of knowledge, the current situation and history of literary studies, and the general status and situation of the humanities world wide that in recent years a renaissance of the discipline of comparative literature appears to take place. This renaissance appears to take place despite Susan Bassnett's often cited statement – a curiously Western-Eurocentric stand in my opinion – that “today, comparative literature in one sense is dead” (*Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* 47). However, this renaissance (perhaps as a quasi implicit structural response to the Anglo-American situation as perceived by the British-English Bassnett) is not occurring in the traditional geographical and cultural loci and mainstream of the discipline such as the United States, France, or Germany (although, I should add in a context of differentiation and with an eye on the particular that disrupts generalizations, some universities in states of the former East Germany such as Halle-Wittenberg and Erfurt appear to be interested in establishing new chairs of comparative literature). While Bassnett may be right that comparative literature in the traditional centres is undergoing both intellectual and institutional changes and a certain loss of position owing to factors such as the takeover of theory by English, the impact of cultural studies, the diminishing number of comparative literature professorships, etc., this loss of presence is occurring in the *centres* of the discipline and with regard to its own natural context of Eurocentrism and Euro-American centre. Clearly, Bassnett's pronouncement of the death of comparative literature is exactly from that Eurocentrism she otherwise is attempting to subvert and oppose in her book. And thus, curiously, Bassnett pays no attention to the strong development of the discipline and the promise it holds outside of the discipline's traditional centres: In the last two decades comparative literature has shown much promise in some countries and cultures where the discipline has not been very strong or, in some cases, in existence at all before. As I mentioned earlier, interestingly, while the traditional centres of the discipline are able, at best, to maintain a status quo of the discipline, in China, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, universities in the states of the former East Germany, etc., the discipline is emerging and developing strongly and this can be gauged by the emergence of new comparative literature journals, new chairs in comparative literature, a marked increase in publications, etc.

To explore a few examples of recent published work: the Portuguese Comparative Literature Association brought out its second series of publications emanating from the recently founded annual comparative literature conferences (Margarida L. Losa, Isménia de Sousa, and Gonçalo Vilas-Boas, eds. *Literatura Comparada: Os Novos Paradigmas* (Porto: Afrontamento, 1996; with articles by Lopes, Carlos, Clüver, Segers, Ramalhete, Opitz, Cadete, Martins, Delgado Mingochio, Braga Neves, Sousa, Capinha, Coutinho, Silva, Pires, Ferreira Duarte, Lam, Carvalho Homem, Barrento, Almeida Flor, Bastos, Teixeira Anacleto, Sequeira, Ferreira Hörster, Carvalho, Hüsgen, Fátima Gil, Keating, Schmidt, Rusch, Viehoff, Zurbach, Schreier, Halász, Esteves, Leal, Ribeiro, Ibsch, Tötösy, Seixo, Paiva Monteiro, Kushner, Moser, Fokkema, Bulger, Silva, Grossegeesse, Reis, Carvalhal, Esperança Pina, Laranjinha, Barros Dias, Moreira, Guincho, Lago, Alves, Carneiro, Simões, Jorge, Sarmiento, Alves, Coelho, Novakovi?, Azevedo, Cordeiro, Silva, Matos Frias, Gil, Conrado, Pina, Lemos, Medeiros, Cunha-Pereira), in Spain – a particular hotspot of comparative literature today – several books and manuals of comparative literature are of note: Dolores Romero López, ed. *Orientaciones em literatura comparada* (Madrid: Arco/Libros, 1997; with articles by Bassnett, Chevrel, Culler, Fokkema, Gillespie, Kushner, Marino, Prawer, Remak, Swiggers, Tötösy), Maria José Vega and Neus Carbonell, eds. *Literatura comparada. Principios y métodos* (Madrid: Gredos, 1998; with articles by Texte, Croce, Gayley, Baldensperger, Van Tieghem, Wellek, Remak, Fokkema, Ruprecht, Laurette, Chaitin, Chevrier, Ashcroft-Gareth-Tiffin, Gnisci, Sniader Lanser, Lefevere, Tötösy), Dolores Romero López' 1998 *Una relectura del "fin de siglo" en el marco de la literatura comparada: teoría y praxis* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998) and Darío Villanueva's collected volume, *Avances en... teoría de la literatura* (Santiago de Compostela: U de Santiago de Compostela, 1994; with articles by Villanueva, Iglesias Santos, Jauss, Manteiga Pouse, Cabo Aseguinolaza, Casas, Even-Zohar), and in Spain, again, there is the new comparative literature journal since 1997 *Exemplaria: Revista Internacional de Literatura Comparada* (University of Huelva). In Argentina, we have the special issue, *Literaturas comparadas*, of *Filología* 30.2 (1997) with translated articles by Antelo, Bernheimer, Gilman, Rodríguez Pérsico, Tötösy, Mignolo, Aguilar, Campos, Rabaté, Merkel, Spiller, Matamoro, Gárate, Chicote, Guido, Iribarren, Gamero, and Muschietti. In Australia there is the new University of Sydney World Literature Series with its first volume by Mabel Lee and Meng Hua, eds. *Cultural Dialogue and Misreading* (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1997; with articles by Gibbins, Hasegawa, Yihuang, Leal, Lee, Lee, Lee, Quinzhang, Matsui, Nakayama, Odagiri, Ota, Linsen, Katsuya, Takachi, Walker, Wang, Wang, Wong, Yip, Yoon), in Holland (a traditionally strong area of comparative literature) we have the outstanding volume, in honour of comparatist Douwe Fokkema, by Harald Hendrix, Joost Kloek, Sophie Levie, and Will van Peer, eds. *The Search for a New Alphabet: Literary Studies in a Changing World* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996; with articles by Andringa, Bertens, Bessière, Behar, Boeft, Bons, Brandsma,

Bronzwaer, Carvalhal, Chang, Chevrel, Coetze, Dev, Dijkstra, Dolezel, Enkvist, Gillespie, Glas, Goedegebuure, Gorp, Gräbe, Ibsch, Janaszek-Ivanicková, Kushner, Lambert, Lange, Lernhout, Livingston, Miner, Moerbeek, Mooij, Musarra-Schroeder, Neubauer, Ben-Porat, Rigney, Ruiten, Runte, Schmidt, Segers, Seixo, Shen, Steinmetz, Stralen, Strydom, Suleiman, Szegedy-Maszák, Thüsen, Tötösy, Turk, Valdés, Coller, Vervliet, Viehoff, Vlasselaers, Wang, Weisgerber, Wesseling, Wiersma, Yuan, Yue, Zwaan), and in China and Hong Kong (among publications in Western languages) we have Yue Daiyun and Alain Le Pichon, eds. *La Licorne et le dragon. Les Malentendus dans la recherche de l'universel* (Peking: Peking UP, 1995; with articles by Yue, Eco, Le Goff, Rey, Danchin, Pichon, Hua, Peng, Shen, Tang, Wang, Sun, Chen, Zhou, Sun, Wang, Teng, Tang, Zhou, Qian, Chun) and the 1995 *New Perspectives: A Comparative Literature Yearbook* (University of Hong Kong and Peking University; with articles by Liu, Yue, Lee, Mi, Jun, Lee, Ding, Tatlow). This interest in the discipline of comparative literature outside the established mainstream French-German-American core may be a result of the traditional time-shift occurring within knowledge transfer or it may be a result of the general globalization emanating from the "peripheries." But there may be another reason, that of a sophisticated approach to the study of culture by scholars in many ways located outside or parallel to the French-German-American mainstream and that dominates the study of literature world wide. What I mean is this: in Anglo-American, French, and German literary study, general or comparative, the aspect of theory saturation is a well-known situation and the fact that in recent years the focus in literary study switched from the study of literature proper to all sorts of inquiries of culture in general brought about a preoccupation of literary scholars with other matter than literature. For comparatists in the mainstream German-French-American core this created serious problems because their areas of theory, interdisciplinarity, etc., have been successfully appropriated and today everyone may be a "comparatist." While this may be an interesting development, it appears to me that scholars working in non-mainstream cultures and within that in comparative literature, seem to be interested in maintaining a focus on *literature* while at the same time they want to study it in an international context writing for a regional scholarly readership.

I would also like to mention that in North America, too, there is new work published in comparative literature. For instance, in Canada we have the special issue of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* (23.1 1996; with articles by Dimic, Tötösy, Brooks, Cavell, Hutcheon, Moser, Fokkema, Gnisci, Nitrini, Wang, Gálik, Teleky) and in the States we have the 1995 special issue on comparative literature of the the journal *World Literature Today* (69.2 1995; with articles by Kadir, Perloff, Loriggio, Balakian, Vuller, Brodsky Lacour, Melas, Isttaif, Komar, Greene, Hutcheon, Hassan, Zhao), to name a couple of truly international and comparatist volumes.

It is in the said international and, in this case local context that I would like to briefly mention a few more volumes. There is Gnisci and Sinopoli's

1995 volume, *Comparare i comparatismi* Roma: Lithos, 1995), a collection of articles about the current situation of comparative literature in selected parts of the world, Latin America (Carvalho; Badin), Japan (Kutsukake), China (Xie), Italy (Sinopoli). One article treats the International Comparative Literature Association project of the writing and publication of a history of literatures in European languages (Pál) and there are several theoretical articles of diverse persuasion: Hugo Dyserinck's imagology, an attempt by Darko Suvin to situate comparativism in media studies via East-West studies, Francesca Neri's study of post-colonial theory as comparative literature, and Dionýz Durišin's concept of the interliterary process. The volume is important for a further reason: it is well known that in Italy the mastery or even interest in foreign languages is limited (perhaps even more than in the United States) and thus the publication of anthologies of comparatist texts serves at least two purposes: it supports the suggestion that the interest in comparativism as an international discipline in the age of globalization makes sense and it suggests that the local aspect of scholarship, that is, the study of the international via the local is also with purpose and reason.

The 1995 Gnisci and Sinopoli volume of contemporary comparative literature in theory and historical perspective is complemented by a further and more recent volume by Gnisci and Sinopoli, their edited volume *Manuale storico di letteratura comparata* (Roma: Meltemi, 1997). Here they provide their Italian readership with a historical perspective of comparative literature from the earliest times (Texte, Croce, Van Tieghem) through the discipline's golden age (Wellek, Etiemble, Remak), through its present tense (Miner, Bernheimer, Yue, Gnisci). The volume contains also a list of comparative literature handbooks and incisive articles since 1931 to the present, a list of the proceedings of International Comparative Literature Association congresses, a list of published volumes of *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, a list of major comparative literature learned journals, and a list of bibliographies of comparative literature. Further, the above mentioned collected volumes of María José Vega and Neus Carbonell, Dolores Romero López, and Daniel Link and María Iribarren, while most attractive because of their significance as harbringers of comparative literature in Spanish, contain translations of classic and canonized texts of comparative literature with few newer studies about the discipline.

And here are a few more examples of current work: the special issue of *neohelicon: acta comparationis litterarum unversarum*, a journal that over the last two decades issued several state-of-the-art volumes about the discipline of comparative literature. Its latest such issue is 24.2 (1997) which contains articles by the usual line-up of established comparatists (Balakian, Gnisci, Runte, Strelka, Szili, Valdés, Weissstein, Zima) but a few newer names found themselves also into the volume (Friggieri, Sexl, Tötösy). With regard to the importance of manuals of comparative literature for teaching, I should like to mention the single North American volume of recent years that can be used as such, John T. Kirby's *The Comparative Reader: A Handlist of Basic Reading in Comparative*

*Literature* (New Haven: Chancery P, 1998; with contributions by Allert, Anderson, Benhamou, Broden, Bullock, Clowes, Dixon, Dubois, Elia, Freeman, Györgyey, Hart, Hsieh, Hughes, Johnson, Kirby, Lamb, Lawton, Leitch, Mancing, Merrell, Mvuyekure, Peterson, Poster, Sagar, Schiappa, Schrag, Scott, Sekine, Shallcross, Sharpley-Whiting, Stephenson, Tamburri, Thompson, White, Zhang). The volume is divided into selected bibliographies of national literatures (further divided into periods), literary and critical theory, various methodologies such as psychological, semiotic, etc., approaches, media and literature incl. film, postcolonial literatures, and an interesting chapter on the professional aspects of the discipline of comparative literature. For a French-language handbook for the study of literature but that is in principle comparatist, see Yves Chevrel's *L'Étudiant chercheur en littérature* (Paris: Hachette, 1992).

In Austrian scholarship a recent volume of interest is the collected volume of Norbert Bachleitner, Alfred Noe, and Hans-Gert Roloff, *Beträge zu Komparatistik und Sozialgeschichte der Literatur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997). The volume is a *Festschrift* in honour of the Austrian comparatist Alberto Martino. The volume is divided into sections of history of reception (with articles by Gemert, Heydemann, Dilk, Bachleitner, Belski), translation (with articles by Knape, Noe, Kanduth, Meloni, Ley, Pfister, Kolb), comparisons of texts (with articles by Pol, Michele, Costazza, Hahl, Sagarra), papers on the social history of literature (with articles by Heger, Hinterndorfer, Mannack, Wittmann, Vignazia, Martens, Fischer, Gugler, Jezek, Göpfert, Girardi, Raponi, Battafarano), and a section on literary theory and comparative literature (with articles by McCarthy, Bertozzi, Rossel, Gillespie, Konstantinović, Roloff). With regard to recent German-language publications in comparative literature, perhaps the most important volume is Peter V. Zima and Johann Strutz's volume *Komparatistik: Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Francke, 1992). The volume is divided into chapters introduction, the history of comparative literature (with focus on American, British, French, German, Marxist approaches), comparative literature as a theory dialogism, the typological approach, the genetic approach, reception theories, translation studies, periods and genres, and an example of regional comparative literature. In the German-language area of scholarship there is also the interesting volume of Reinhold Görling, *Heterotopia: Lektüren einer interkulturellen Literaturwissenschaft* (München: Fink, 1997). The volume is interesting because while the author refrains from naming comparative literature – there are brief references to the discipline on pages 27, 34, 53, and 65 – and the general concept of the book as well as the applications to primary texts of the proposed approach are comparatist. Perhaps the reason for the author's understated references to comparative literature is a result of his acute observation of the discipline's often preoccupation of doing comparative literature by default only. That is, the situation when the framework and its applications are based on and in the bases on national literatures.

The above brief survey of the recent history of comparative literature should be augmented by shorter reports and descriptions of various

conferences such as by Steven Tötösy's "Comparative Literature and Applied Cultural Studies, Or, a Report About the XIV<sup>th</sup> Triennial Congress of the ICLA/AILC (University of Alberta, August 1994)." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 21.3 (1994): 469-90. or "The Study of Literature in China and Taiwan Today: Impressions of a Visitor" in Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Jennifer W. Jay, eds., *East Asian Cultural and Historical Perspectives: Histories and Society / Culture and Literatures* (Edmonton: Research Institute for Comparative Literature, U of Alberta, 1997, 341-50) or Marko Juvan's "Thematics and Intellectual Content: The XV<sup>th</sup> Triennial Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association in Leiden" *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal* 1.1 (1999) at

<<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/clcwebjournal/clcweb99-1/juvan99.html>> or the personal histories volume of Lionel Gossman and Mihail I. Spariosu, eds., *Building a Profession: Autobiographical Perspectives on the Beginnings of Comparative Literature in the United States* (Albany: SUNY, 1994). In German-language scholarship, there is also the volume *Kurze Bücherkunde für Literaturwissenschaftler* by Carsten Zelle (Tübingen: Francke, 1998) which contains a good section on comparative literature. Interestingly, the volume also contains data of material in the new media. Last but not least, new work in comparative literature is also available in the various proceedings and volumes of selected papers from the congresses of International Comparative Literature Association: most recent volumes are from the Tokyo, Alberta, and Leiden congresses (for the bibliographical data, table of contents, and addresses of contacts of the Alberta ICLA volumes, please see

<<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/clcwebjournal/books.html>>).

Clearly, the discipline of comparative literature – historically and as many of the above referred to examples of current work demonstrate – has intrinsically a content and form which facilitate the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of culture and literature and it has a history that substantiated this content and form. Predicated on the borrowing of methods from other disciplines and on the application of the appropriated method to areas of study single-language literary study more often than tends to neglect, the discipline is difficult to define because thus it is fragmented and pluralistic. But it is a discipline with a distinguished history and promise. Historically, the comparative perspective and method has proven itself indispensable in many disciplines and established itself accordingly, for example in disciplines such as "comparative physiology" or history, where, as we can see, for example, in a review of the influential volume *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements* by George M. Fredrickson (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997) that the comparative perspective give[s] us a good opportunity for assessing how comparative history can contribute to modern knowledge ... in *The Comparative Imagination*, Fredrickson welcomes the increasing tendency of historians of the United States to write from a "comparative perspective," by using foreign

examples to explain what is distinctive about American society. (Leonard Thompson, "Comparatively Speaking," *The New York Review of Books* [14 May 1998]: 48-51; 48; incidently, Fredrickson proclaims to a "comparativist" and explains that before his turn to history, he pursued the study of comparative literature [8])

Now, I would like to briefly discuss the notion of comparative cultural studies as I introduced at the beginning of my article. Taking my point of departure from the current interest and large amount of work produced in cultural studies everywhere and applying my approach to comparative literature from within the framework and methodology of the systemic and empirical approach to literature and culture in my book, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, I propose here a revised version of the principles I presented in my book. I should like to mention also that to date the comparative aspect in cultural studies is relatively unexplored and I am aware of only a few instances such as the graduate program in comparative culture at Sophia University in Tokyo, the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the University of Klagenfurt, or the program of cultural studies and comparative literature at the University of Minnesota as far as institutional examples are concerned. In scholarship I am aware of Christian Gerel's "Urbane Leitkulturen: Eine Perspektive für vergleichende kulturwissenschaftliche Studien" at <http://www.ifk.or.at/ifk/pages/workshop/ws980004.htm> and of Itamar Even-Zohar's more recent work such as "Polysystem Theory and Culture Research" and "Culture Repertoire and the Wealth of Collective Entities" at <http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/papers/>.

I should like to mention that many of the principles I am suggesting here are obviously part and parcel of various approaches, theoretical or methodological and/or national and homogenous literatures. My point is that it is the *cumulative* perspective of the approach that may make a difference and that may be innovative.

The First General Principle of comparative cultural studies is the postulate that in and of the study, pedagogy, and research of culture – culture is defined as all human activity resulting in artistic production – it is not the "what" but rather the "how" that is of importance. This means that it is method that is of crucial importance in comparative cultural studies in particular and, consequently, in the study of literature and culture as a whole.

The Second General Principle of comparative cultural studies is the theoretical as well as methodological postulate to move and to 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 turn, 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, and peripheral and it encompasses both form and substance.

The Third General Principle of comparative cultural studies is the necessity for the scholar working in this field to acquire in-depth grounding in more than one language and culture as well as other disciplines before further in-depth study of theory and methodology. However, this principle creates structural and administrative problems on the institutional and pedagogical levels. For instance, how does one allow for development – intellectually as well as institutionally – from a focus on one national culture (exclusionary) towards the inclusionary and interdisciplinary principles of comparative cultural studies? The solution of designating comparative cultural studies as a postgraduate discipline only is problematic and counter-productive. Instead, the solution is the allowance for a parallelism in intellectual approach, institutional structure, and administrative practice.

The Fourth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its given focus to study culture in its parts (literature, arts, film, popular culture, theatre, the publishing industry, the history of the book as a cultural product, etc.) and as a whole in relation to other forms of human expression and activity and in relation to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (history, sociology, psychology, etc.). The obstacle here is that the attention to other fields of expression and other disciplines of study results in the lack of a clearly definable, recognizable, single-focussed, and major theoretical and methodological framework of comparative cultural studies. There is a problem of naming and designation exactly because of the multiple approach and parallelism. In turn, this lack of recognized and recognizable products results in the discipline's difficulties of marketing itself within the intermechanisms of intellectual recognition and institutional power.

The Fifth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its built-in special focus on English, based on its impact emanating from North American cultural studies which is, in turn, rooted in British cultural studies along with influences from French and German thought. This is a composite principle of approach and methodology. The focus on English as a means of communication and access to information should not be taken as Euro-American-centricity. In the Western hemisphere and in Europe but also in many other cultural (hemi)spheres, English has become the *lingua franca* of communication, scholarship, technology, business, industry, etc. This new global situation prescribes and inscribes that English gain increasing importance in scholarship and pedagogy, including the study of literature. The composite and parallel method here is that because comparative cultural studies is not self-referential and exclusionary; rather, the parallel use of English is effectively converted into a tool for and of communication in the study, pedagogy, and scholarship of literature. Thus, in comparative cultural studies the use of English should not represent any form of colonialism (and if it does, one disregards it or fights it with English rather than by opposing English) as

follows from principles One to Three. And it should also be obvious that is the English speaker who is, in particular, in need of other languages.

The Sixth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its theoretical and methodological focus on evidence-based research and analysis. This principle is with reference to methodological requirements in the description of theoretical framework building and the selection of methodological approaches. From among the several evidence-based theoretical and methodological approaches available in literary theory, culture research, cultural anthropology, sociology, etc., the systemic and empirical approach to culture and the polysystem approach are perhaps the two most advantageous and precise frameworks and methodologies for comparative cultural studies.

The Seventh General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its attention and insistence on methodology in interdisciplinary study (an umbrella term), with three main types of methodological precision: intra-disciplinarity (analysis and research within the disciplines in the humanities), multi-disciplinarity (analysis and research by one scholar employing any other discipline), and pluri-disciplinarity (analysis and research by team-work with participants from several disciplines). In the latter case, an obstacle is the general reluctance of literary and culture scholars to employ team-work for the study of literature. It should be noted that this principle is built-in in the framework and methodology of the systemic and empirical approach to culture.

The Eighth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its content against the contemporary paradox of globalization versus localization. There is a paradoxical development in place with regard to both global movements and intellectual approaches and their institutional representation. On the one hand, the globalization of technology, industry, and communication is actively pursued and implemented. But on the other hand the forces of exclusion as represented by local, racial, national, gender, disciplinary, etc., interests prevail in (too) many aspects. This localization can be seen in the institutional parameters of current cultural studies itself. Scholars in literature or various other disciplines producing work in cultural studies (the intellectual as well as institutional carriers of the discipline) appear to be appointed based on scholarship in a single area and this results in correspondingly lacking work. In other words, intellectual focus when in combination with institutional aims and objectives result, still, in the interest of single focus scholarship. For this to change toward the comparative cultural studies proposed here, a paradigm shift in the humanities will be necessary. Thus, the Eighth Principle represents the notion of working against the stream by promoting comparative cultural studies as a global and inclusive discipline of international humanities.

The Ninth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is its claim on the vocational commitment of its practitioners. In other words, why study and work in comparative cultural studies? The reasons are the intellectual as well as pedagogical values this approach and discipline offers in order to implement the recognition and inclusion of the Other

with and by commitment to the in-depth knowledge of several cultures (i.e., languages, literatures, etc.) as basic parameters. In consequence, the discipline of comparative cultural studies as proposed advances our knowledge by a multi-faceted approach based on scholarly rigour and multi-layered knowledge with precise methodology.

The Tenth General Principle of comparative cultural studies is with regard to the troubled intellectual and institutional situation of the humanities in general. That is, the Tenth Principle is with reference to the politics of scholarship and the academe. We know that the humanities in general experience serious and debilitating institutional (and, depending on one's stand, also intellectual) difficulties and because of this the humanities in the general social and public discourse are becoming more and more marginalized (not the least by their own doing). It is in this context that the principles of a comparative cultural studies is proposed to at least to attempt to adjust the further marginalization and social irrelevance of the humanities.

As an extension of the tenth principle of comparative cultural studies, I would like to refer to the pervasive questioning of scholarship in the humanities and that can be inferred from the current debate about tenure, for example. In an article entitled "A New Approach to Tenure and Scholarship," Hymie Rubenstein and Rodney Clifton state that "If the many studies of research productivity at American universities can be generalized to Canada ... then ... more than 50 percent of Canadian academics publish the equivalent of a single book and less than a dozen scholarly articles over their entire career" ("A New Approach to Tenure and Scholarship," *University of Affairs / Affaires Universitaires* [May 1998]: 23-24; 23). Clearly, this level of productivity in output is hard to justify or to explain and it is doubtlessly one of the reasons of the general public's low opinion of the humanities (and the authors of the article have not even begun to discuss aspects of the quality of the scholarship they are referring to or aspects of pedagogy such as excellence in teaching, etc.).

In the context of comparative literature and cultural studies as a new designation of comparative cultural studies as proposed above and the impact and importance of New Media brings me to my last remarks and to a further extension of the notion of comparative cultural studies. There is no doubt in my mind that the world wide web and the internet provide possibilities for the study of culture, incl. comparative literature and the proposed comparative cultural studies and that, in my opinion, scholars in the humanities must exploit. Unfortunately, there is much Ludditism among scholars in the humanities including comparatists while scholars in cultural studies tend to be more interested and competent (for an example of a discussion of this resistance, see Norbert Gabriel, *Kulturwissenschaften und Neue Medien. Wissensvermittlung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Darmstadt: Primus, 1997). For example, how could it be possible that to date there one single operative ejournal of comparative literature anywhere, the recently established *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal* at <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/clcwebjournal/>. (There is also the U de Mon-

tréal based *Surfaces* but it has been dormant since 1997). Granted, there are some infrastructural problems, too, which affect the situation of the web and the internet in general: there are two such problems of major impact: one is the obvious problem of different technological development and availabilities among regions of the world and the second one is the infrastructure of telephone line providers and its economics. Technologically advanced societies of Europe are seriously handicapped in the development of the internet in comparison with North America for the simple reason that local calls are expensive in Europe while they are much less to minimal in North America. Clearly, in Europe the monopoly of the state telephone companies will have to be modified and this has started to begin: whether it will evolve to similarly easy access to telephone lines or other ways of web access – such as cable TV – remains to be seen. And there is also the perception of scholars in the humanities of the emergence and significance of web journals. It is true that some web journals do not have a comparable scholarly content traditional hard-copy journals can offer. But this can be changed and the time constraints and financial constraints hard-copy journal suffer under will make it ultimately imperative that scholars in the humanities switch to e-journals for knowledge transfer and to the internet in scholarly communication. And there are some good news: *CLCWeb* is now online with three issues of five articles each and several book reviews in each issue (of interest for the topic of this article is Pablo Zambrano's review of new books in comparative literature in Spain in issue 1.1). As to the use of the new journal and its library with bibliographies, the international directory of comparatists, etc., we have some encouraging data. In the first available period of statistical analysis of the *CLCWeb's* access and use online, 13-30 April 1999, the e-journal received 1,950 hits. This means 108 hits per day on the average and for an esoteric subject such as comparative literature and culture this suggests much traffic and use. The statistics also show – among many aspects of the ways, length, precise use of specific sections of the journal, etc. – that *CLCWeb* has been accessed from virtually every country on earth. Since the first statistics of access to and traffic on the journal in March, the average daily hits increased dramatically: by August the average number of hits per day was 388 and this average increased to 677 hits per by September (for the statistics link from the index page to “*CLCWeb* Traffic and Use Reports” at <<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/clcwebjournal/>>).

## ■ TOWARD A COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek proposes in his article, “Toward a Comparative Cultural Studies” the developing of a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of culture and literature. He argues that the discipline of comparative literature has developed in its history many aspects of cultural

studies which are considered innovative today. In the first part of the article, he presents selected new work in comparative literature especially from areas of scholarship outside the traditional centres of the discipline, namely American, German, and French scholarship. His argument for a comparative cultural studies can be schematised as follows: 1) To study literature (text and/or literary system) with and in the context of culture and the discipline of cultural studies; 2) In cultural studies itself to study literature with borrowed elements (theories and methods) from comparative literature; and 3) To study culture and its composite parts and aspects in the mode of the proposed "comparative cultural studies" approach instead of the currently reigning single-language approach dealing with a topic with regard to its nature and problematics in one culture only. At the same time, comparative cultural studies would implicitly and explicitly disrupt the established hierarchy of cultural products and production similarly to the disruption cultural studies itself has performed. The suggestion is to pluralize and parallelize the study of culture without hierarchization. The incipient framework of a comparative cultural studies is then introduced in the article by a ten-point draft proposal of how to do comparative cultural studies.

September 1999