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¹ Cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven: *The Empirical Science of Literature. Constructivist Theory of Literature*. In: Makaryk, Irene R.: *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto 1993, pp. 36-39; Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi 1998, pp. 13-41; Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies*. In: *CLCWeb* 1, no. 3 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-3/totosy99.html>; Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Comparative Cultural Studies and Constructivism*. In: *Frame: Tijdschrift voor Literatuurwetenschap* 15, no. 1 (2001), pp. 38-60 [online vers.: [http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/totosy\(constructivism\).html](http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/totosy(constructivism).html)].

In this paper, I first introduce some principles of comparative cultural studies, followed by a brief description of methodology, systemic and empirical approach, and contextual framework. This introduction of theory and method will be followed by a brief discussion of the notion of Central European culture – real or imagined – defined as an ›in-between peripheral‹ and ›(post)colonial space‹. Next, with the objective to exemplify Central European culture as represented in literature, the framework and method are applied to samples of second-generation North American Jewish memoirs about Central Europe and to samples of contemporary Eastern German and Hungarian prose.

Comparative cultural studies are a field of study in the humanities and social sciences where tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with the field of cultural studies; the objects of study are all sorts of ›culture‹ and culture products including literature. Work in comparative cultural studies is performed in a contextual and relational manner and with a plurality of methods and approaches, in inter-disciplinarity, and, if and when required, in team work. In comparative cultural studies the processes of communicative action(s) in culture – and the way, these processes *work* – constitute the objectives of research and study. However, comparative cultural studies do not exclude traditional textual analysis or other established fields of study.

The framework of comparative cultural studies is constructed from several fields and disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Epistemologically, it is rooted in radical constructivism, comparative literature, and cultural studies. Comparative cultural studies are no »master theory«, but *one* framework among several others; they have to be tested and applied, and to be used as a *tool* in order to understand and to *produce* new knowledge. From the disciplinary, epistemological, ideological, and intellectual basis of the framework, I extrapolate an incipient set of principles as follows below. For now, the principles represent a basis for discussion and a clear statement without lengthy descriptive argumentation but which are in need of further theoretical work and development as well as exemplification by application. I also contend that the principles of comparative cultural studies presented here are innovative precisely because – curiously enough – notions of cultural studies in most cases lack a comparative, that is, a contextual, pluralist, and supra-national range and depth of thought and application.¹

The ten basic and general principles of comparative cultural studies are as follows:

The 1st principles of comparative cultural studies is that *in* and *for* the study, pedagogy and research of culture (defined as all human activity resulting in artistic production) it is not the »what« but rather the »how« that is of importance. This postulate follows the constructivist tenet of attention to the »how« and process. To »compare« does not – and must not – imply a hierarchy: In the comparative mode of investigation and analysis a matter studied is not »better« than any other. This also means, that *method* in particular is of crucial importance in comparative cultural studies and, consequently, in the study of literature and culture.

The 2nd 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 whole approach, 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 a single culture study and their result of rigidly defined disciplinary boundaries are notions against which comparative cultural studies offer an alternative as well as a parallel field of study. This inclusion extends to all other – marginal, minority, border, and peripheral – and it encompasses both, form and substance. However, attention must be paid to the *how* of any inclusionary approach, attestation, methodology, and ideology in order not to repeat the mistakes of an »universalization« from a »superior« Eurocentric point of view. Dialogue is the only solution.

2 Cf. Tötösy 1998, pp. 79-82.

The 3rd 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 parallelism in intellectual approach, institutional structure, and administrative practice.

The 4th 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 within 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-focused, and major theoretical and methodological framework of comparative cultural studies. Due to the multiple approaches and parallelisms there is a problem of naming and designating. In turn, this lack of recognized and recognizable products results in the discipline's difficulties of marketing itself within the inter-mechanisms of intellectual recognition and institutional power.

The 5th 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 gains 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 the English-language speaker in particular is in need of other languages.

The 6th 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 the study of culture, literary and culture theory, cultural anthropology, sociology of culture and knowledge, etc., the systemic and empirical approach is perhaps the most advantageous and precise methodology for use in comparative cultural studies. This does not mean that comparative cultural studies and/or its methodology comprise a meta theory; rather, comparative cultural studies and its methodologies are implicitly and explicitly pluralistic.

The 7th principle of comparative cultural studies is its attention and insistence on methodology in interdisciplinary study (an umbrella concept), with three main types of methodological precision: intra-disciplinarity (analysis and research within the disciplines of the humanities), multi-disciplinarity (analysis and research by one scholar employing any other discipline), and pluri-disciplinarity (analysis and research by teamwork with participants from several disciplines). In the latter case, an obstacle is the general reluctance of humanities' scholars to employ teamwork in the study of culture including literature. It should be noted that this principle is built-in in the framework and methodology of the systemic and empirical approach to culture.²

The 8th principle of comparative cultural studies is its content against the contemporary paradox of globalization versus localization. There is a paradoxical development in place with

3 Glaserfeld, Ernst v.: *Radical Constructivism: A Way of Knowing and Learning*. New York: Falmer 1995; Foerster, Heinz v.: *Wissen und Ge-wissen. Versuch einer Brücke*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1993; Schmidt, Siegfried J.: *The Empirical Study of Literature: Reasons, Plans, Goals*. In: Tötösy de Zepetnek, St./ Sywenky, Irene (Eds.): *The Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture as Theory and Application*. Edmonton: Research Inst. for Comp. Lit., Univ. of Alberta / Siegen: Inst. for Emp. Lit. and Media Research, Univ. Siegen 1997, pp. 137-153; Schmidt, S.J.: *Kognitive Autonomie und soziale Orientierung. Konstruktivistische Bemerkungen zum Zusammenhang von Kognition, Kommunikation, Medien und Kultur*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1994; for an overview of constructivism cf. Riegler, Alex (Ed.): *Radical Constructivism 1996ff*. In: www.univie.ac.at/constructivism.

4 Cf. Even-Zohar, Itamar: *Polysystem Studies*. In: *Poetics Today* 11, 1 (1990) [Special Iss.], pp. 1-268; Schmidt 1994; Schmidt 1997; Wallerstein, Immanuel: *After Liberalism*. New York: The New Pr. 1995; Wallerstein, I.: *The Relevance of the Concept of Semiperiphery to Southern Europe*. In: Arrighi, Giovanni (Ed.): *Semiperipheral Development: The Politics of Southern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Beverly Hills: Sage 1985, pp. 31-39.

5 Cf. Schmidt 1994; Schmidt 1997.

6 Cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Systemic Approaches to Literature – An Introduction with Selected Bibliographies*. In: *Canad. Rev. of Comp. Lit. / Rev. Canadienne de Lit. Comp.* 19, no. 1/2 (1992), pp. 21-93; Tötösy 1999.

7 For detail cf. Tötösy (1992), pp. 21-93; Tötösy 1993; Tötösy 1998, pp. 13-41; Tötösy 1999; Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Systemic and Empirical Approach*. In: *Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Comp. Robert Drislane and Gary Parkinson. Edmonton: Athabasca Univ. and ICAAP: Intern. Consort. of Advancement of Acad. Publ. 2001; <http://datadump.icaap.org/cgi-bin/glossary/SocialDict/SocialDict> and Tötösy (2001).

8 Cf., i.e., Ash, Timothy Garton: *Does Central Europe Exist?* [1986]. In: Ash, T.G.: *Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*. Cambridge: Granta 1991, pp. 161-191; Hanley, Sean/ Stastna, Kazi/ Stroehlein, Andrew: *Central Europe Review: Re-Vie-wing Central Europe*. In: *Central Europe Rev.* 1, 1 (1999); <http://www.ce-review.org/99/1/hanley1.html> [28.06.1999]; for a bibliography on the concept cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Selected Bibliography of Work on Canadian Ethnic Minority Writing*

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. For a change towards comparative cultural studies, as proposed here, a paradigm shift in the humanities and social sciences will be necessary. Thus, the eighth principle represents the notion of working against the stream by promoting comparative cultural studies as a global, inclusive, and multi-disciplinary framework in inter- and supra-national humanities.

The 9th 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-facetted approach based on scholarly rigor and multi-layered knowledge with precise methodology.

The 10th principle of comparative cultural studies concerns the politics of scholarship and academe with regard to the troubled intellectual and institutional situation of the humanities in general. The humanities in general experience serious and debilitating institutional – and, depending on one's stand, also intellectual – difficulties, getting more and more marginalized (not the least by their own doing) within the general social and public discourse. It is in this context that the principles of comparative cultural studies are at least proposed to attempt to adjust the further marginalization and increasing social irrelevance of the humanities.

For method in comparative cultural studies the systemic and empirical approach is favoured while others may be just as appropriate and useful, and the main question is, *what* happens to products of culture and *how*: They are produced, published, distributed, read, listened to, seen, imitated, assessed, discussed, studied, censored, etc. The contextual approach originates as a reaction to, and an attempt at solving inconsistencies, and as problem of hermeneutical studies. It is also an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach borrowing from a number of areas in the humanities and social sciences, including (radical) constructivism³, systems theories⁴, the empirical⁵, cultural anthropology, ethnology, reception theory, the sociology of knowledge, cognitive science, etc. As seen in the work of scholars in Germany, Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Canada, the United States and elsewhere in several fields of study, there are several types of systemic and/or empirical approaches which can be grouped into a general umbrella approach, the systemic and empirical approach.⁶

The principal intent of scholars working with such an approach can be characterized as an attempt at reducing metaphorical interpretation as the dominant approach in the humanities and to focus on process and context instead. That is, it is proposed that the study of culture and literature should be with focus on the study of processes and contexts and that this type of study be based in systems theories and the notion of the empirical defined as observation and knowledge-based argumentation. The system(s) of culture and actions within are observed and described as depending on two conventions (hypotheses) that are tested continually: the aesthetic convention (as opposed to the convention of facts in the daily language of reference) and the polyvalence convention (as opposed to the monovalency in the daily empirical world). Thus, the systemic and empirical approach as method not only concentrates on the study of a »text« (defined here as any cultural product) itself, but roles of action within the system(s) of culture, namely, the production, distribution, reception, and the processing of culture products. The steps to be taken in the systemic and empirical approach are the formation of a hypothesis, practice, testing, and evaluation.⁷

The designations of »Central Europe« and »Central European culture« are matters of considerable controversy and debate.⁸ However, in my view there is a geo-political space called Central Europe that, consequently, contains a landscape of culture(s) comprising of real or imagined⁹ and variable similarities of shared histories, cultural practices, institutions, social and behavioural 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, former East



(to 1999). In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal (Library) (2001); <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/caneth.html>.

9 Cf., i.e., the concepts of Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso 1991.

10 For more detail cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: *Configurations of Post-coloniality and National Identity: In-between Peripherality and Narratives of Change*. In: *The Comparatist: Journ. of the Southern Comp. Lit. Ass.* 23 (1999), pp. 89-110; Moore, David Chioni. *Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique*. In: *Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Ass. of America [PMLA]* 116, no. 1 (2001), pp. 111-128.

11 Janaszek-Ivaničková, Halina: *Post-modern Literature and the Cultural Identity of Central and Eastern Europe*. In: Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven/Gunew, Sneja (Eds.): *Postcolonial Literatures: Theory and Practice / Les Littératures post-coloniales: Théories et réalisations*. *Canad. Rev. of Comp. Lit. / Revue Canadienne de Lit. Comp.* 22, no. 3/4 (1995) [Thematic Iss.], pp. 805-811, qtd. p. 806; cf. also Pilaň, Martin: *Making Both Ends Meet, or, Czech Literature after November 1989*. In: Tötösy/Gunew 1995, pp. 845-851.

12 Cf., for example, Jay, Paul: *Contingency Blues: The Search for Foundations in American Criticism*. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin 1997.

Germany, and the countries of former Yugoslavia, etc., thus including the Habsburg lands and spheres of influence, historically, of Austrian and German centres. While this region has been 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 national and cultural self-referentiality and the cultural influence and primacy of major Western cultures and economic and political centres they have been and continue to be influenced by. In addition, they are in a (post)colonial 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.¹⁰

Europe is not at all »homogeneous«, and the North American designation of »Eurocentrism« as a *negative* construction is at times questionable, as the designation does not account for the differences and hierarchies within Europe. In reality, there are several »centres« – France, Germany, and England – and »near centres« such as Italy, the Benelux, the Nordic countries, etc., and these centres reflect economic and political power. And there are several »peripheries« such as Southern and East Europe, Portugal, the Baltic countries, etc. In this differentiated view of Europe, Central and East Europe comprises the successor states of the Austrian empire and beyond, with their Austro-German and German economic, cultural, political, etc., spheres of influence. In general social discourse, as well as in scholarship, Central and East European cultures, owing to their situation of peripherality, need proclaim within Europe that they are Europeans and that they belong to Europe, while the sliding scale of cultural hierarchies based on economic realities from West to Central and to East Europe remains an established practice although more implicit than explicit, yet practiced rather than admitted and discussed.

After the Second World War, the primary colonization of Central and East European countries occurred by the ideological, political, economic, institutional, etc., leadership-by-force of the Soviet centre, the communist politburo, directly and/or indirectly from Moscow, in politics, the economy, in and via the structures of social, educational, cultural, etc., institutions including military occupation in most countries of the region. There was also the everyday and ideological oppression performed, in all walks of life, by the local communist nomenclatura of the country. However, Soviet colonialism of Central and East Europe is to be understood not only within the traditional definition of colonialism but also in terms of what I define as »filtered colonialism«, a type of colonialism that manifested itself in a secondary colonialization through ideological, political, social, cultural, and other means during and after the forty-year period of Soviet colonialism. »Filtered colonialism« is to be understood as a result of the primary colonization, as penetration and imprint of cultural processes and behaviour. For example, filtered colonialism is relevant when contemporary literatures of the region are discussed in the context of postmodernism: Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková draws the conclusion that innovation in the literatures of the region occurred before 1989 under the primary colonialism of the Soviet centre, and that postmodern tendencies »which are characteristic of postindustrial and postmodern societies, and which made themselves felt with such vigor in post-communist – in some ways, owing to the economic and political influence of the USSR, ›(post)colonial« – countries after 1989, do not, upon closer inspection, constitute recent phenomena in these countries.«¹¹ In other words: The existence of postmodernity in Central and East Europe involves Soviet colonialism *before* and *after* 1989/90, and it is thus that the impact of Soviet colonialism as still remains an element in and of the region's culture(s).

The paradigms of »centre/periphery« and »centre/margin« are established concepts in post-colonial studies and the concept of »peripherality« with regard to culture exists in a number of varieties such as »border writing«,¹² in Amin Malak's ambivalent affiliations and »in-betweenness«, Homi K. Bhabha's »third space« and notion of »hybridity«, François Paré's »locations of exiguity« and the »margins«, etc. With specific reference to Central and East European literature as border and margin, Tomislav Longinović's designation of the region's culture as »borderline« is relevant, similarly to Marcel Cornis-Pope's view, who writes, in a Central European context, about the Romanian avant-garde that »living in a provisional state, on a margin that, considering the more general position of Romanian literature in Europe, was in fact a margin of the



13 Cf. Malak, Amin: *Ambivalent Affiliations and the Postcolonial Condition: The Fiction of M.G. Vassanji*. In: *World Literature Today* 67, no. 2 (1993), pp. 277-282; Bhabha, Homi K.: *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge 1994; Paré, François: *Exiguity: Reflections on the Margins of Literature*. Transl. by Lin Burman. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP 1997; Longinović, Tomislav Z.: *Borderline Culture: The Politics of Identity in Four Twentieth-Century Slavic Novels*. Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas 1993; Cornis-Pope _____, p. 119 [author's italics].

14 Cf. Klobucka, Anna: *Theorizing European Periphery*. In: *Symploke: A Journ. for the Intermingling of Literary, Cultural and Theoretical Scholarship* 5, no. 1, iss. 2 (1997), pp. 119-135; Chase-Dunn, Christopher: *Resistance to Imperialism: Semiperipheral Actors*. In: *Review [Fernand Braudel Centre]* 13, iss. 1 (1990), pp. 1-31; Wallerstein 1985; Wallerstein 1995.

15 Minh-ha, Trinh T.: *No Master Territories*. In: Ashcroft, Bill/ Griffiths, Gareth/ Tiffin, Helen (Eds.): *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge 1995, pp. 215-218, p. 216.

16 Even-Zohar 1990, p. 68.

margin.«¹³ A framework similar to my own is Anna Klobucka's notion of ›semi-periphery‹. Klobucka develops her framework for the study of ›semi-peripheral‹ cultures and literatures such as Poland, Hungary, Portugal, etc. Klobucka's framework is based on the notions of ›world system‹ and ›semi-periphery‹ initially proposed by Christopher Chase-Dunn and Immanuel Wallerstein.¹⁴

As postulated in the proposed framework of comparative cultural studies and in the method of the systemic and empirical approach, it is the processes of cultural mediation, filtering, assimilation, and creative alterations of cultural knowledge that contain provide data for the understanding of the centre and periphery and periphery and in-betweenness configuration and specific situation of the region. Concepts of ›centre/margin‹ and ›centre/periphery‹ can also be understood that in some instances, while the centre holds leverage, the ›margin/periphery‹ responds by »other affirmations and negations« owing to the ›margin's/periphery's‹ relative sovereignty.¹⁵ And this is precisely the case of Central and East Europe culture. They are located in in-between peripherality where strategies of polyvalence conventions mediate the centre's impact on cultural self-referentiality. While the notions of ›centre/periphery‹ or ›centre/margin‹ – i.e. in Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem framework or Trinh Minh-ha's concept of oppositions – focus on aspects of the margin, in the case of Central and East Europe these concepts are not entirely applicable because of national self-referentiality and relative sovereignty of these cultures – and where they are ever present factors in the cultural and social discourse of the region and beyond. The reference to national cultural sovereignty in these countries is important, since the idea and *possibility* of cultural colonialism by the former Soviet centre is strenuously objected to by Central and East European intellectuals, while the influence of a Western centre such as Germany is accepted as »given«. This opposition is based on the perception and insistence that Soviet colonialism exerted no direct cultural influence while the notion that the centre's primary colonialism, that influenced the region's culture(s) and literature(s) (and was followed by a secondary colonialism and thus filtered impact, that occurred in the processes of culture) was also consequently rejected. This implicit and explicit denial of the impact of the Soviet centre and communism on the cultures of Central and East Europe is a blind spot on the intellectual and scholarly landscape although it may well be that it is rhetorical and will be acknowledged and understood in time.

While postcolonial paradigms of ›centre/periphery‹ and ›centre/margin‹ are useful and partially applicable in the study of Central and East European culture(s), they lack methodology and precise taxonomy and are often political or rhetorical in nature. The notion of ›in-between peripherality‹ and the framework of comparative cultural studies serve as an alternative, with built-in elements such as the systemic and empirical approach, precisely defined taxonomy, attention to empirical evidence, and with attention to both, textual and extra-textual (that is, systemic) properties and relationships in/of culture. For this, I borrow aspects of the poly-systemic concept of ›centre/periphery‹. For example, Even-Zohar postulates that a dominant culture or a base source »imposes its language [culture] and texts on a subjugated community«¹⁶, and this can be applied to Central and East Europe, albeit with an extension: When the indigenous culture is in content and form self-centred and self-referential – as in the case of Central and East European cultures and literatures – the leverage and power of a superseding colonialist centre, that is, a dominant culture, is not immediately obvious or clear. This is especially the case from the perspective of the subjugated community. Rather, the influence on various and specific aspects of culture, resulting from the colonialist centre, can be observed and analyzed as the in-between position of the peripheral subject. Thus, in (post)colonial cultures of Central and East Europe, there are three principal centres and sources of influence: the indigenous centre, that is, the self-referential national culture, that in reality is never as homogeneous as proclaimed and propagated, and that includes many kinds and types of influence such as the German influence in Austria and Hungary or the French in Romania, etc., the Western centres with German, French, etc., influences, and finally the Soviet communist/socialist centre, with its impact filtered over forty years of colonialism.

The existence of a Central European culture has been and still is contested. The »public« intellectual Milan Kundera argues, that the geographic boundaries of Central Europe are vague, changeable, and debatable, and that it is polycentral and looks different from different vantage points: Warsaw or Vienna, Budapest or Ljubljana. Central Europe never was an intentional unit. With the exception of the Habsburg emperor, his court, and few isolated intellectuals, no Central European desired a Central Europe. The cultures of the individual peoples had centri-



17 Kundera, Milan: Three Contexts of Art: From Nation to World. In: Cross Currents: A Yearb. of Central European Culture 12 (1993), pp. 5-14, p. 12; cf. also Kundera, M.: The Tragedy of Central Europe. In: The New York Rev. of Books (April 1984). On Kundera and Central Europe cf. Pichova, Hana: Milan Kundera and the Identity of Central Europe. In: Tötösy 2002, pp. 103-114.

18 Cf. also Deltcheva, Roumiana: Comparative Central European Culture: Displacements and Peripherality. In: Tötösy de Zepetnek, St. (Ed.): Comparative Central European Culture. West Lafayette: Purdue UP 2002, pp. 149-168; Imre, Anikó: Comparative Central European Culture: Gender in Literature and Film. In: Tötösy 2002, pp. 71-90.

19 Cf., e.g., Papp de Carrington, Ildikó: From »Hunky« to Don Juan: The Changing Hungarian Identity in Canadian Fiction. In: Canadian Lit. 89 (1981), pp. 33-44; for a bibliogr. with items on image studies cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: Selected Bibliography of Theoretical and Critical Texts on Canadian Ethnic Minority Writing. In: Pivato, Joseph (Ed.): Ethnic Minority Writing and Literary Theory. Canadian Ethnic Studies / Etudes ethniques au Canada 28, no. 3 (1996) [Special Iss.], pp. 210-223 [online version: <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/caneth.html>].

fugal, separatist tendencies. They preferred to look at England, France, or Russia than at each other; and if in spite of that (or perhaps just *because* of that) they resembled each other, it was without their will or against their will.¹⁷

If the existence of Central Europe and thus of a Central European culture is questionable as Kundera suggests, he admits that they »resemble« each other and this is where the »outside«, the locus of observation and perception plays a crucial role: looking at the region from the outside allows, at the very least for the notion of variable similarities and thus the designation of a Central European culture. But I argue that in social discourse, it appears, the existence of a specific space called »Central Europe« is generally accepted, although it must be admitted that the acceptance of the notion is more often than not exercised from the »outside«. That is, while Central Europeans themselves, as Kundera suggests, take a differentiated, disinterested, and/or ironic view of the notion of a real or imagined Central Europe and Central European culture. When the notion is used outside Central Europe it is more readily accepted and applied. For example, when Milan Kundera lives in Paris, and Josef Skvorecky or George (György) Faludy live in Toronto, they become »hybrid« Hungarian, Czech and Central European. Individual members and national groups – ethnic groups in North America and other locations of emigration and/or exile – interact in many aspects they would not have before. Thus, Czechs and Hungarians, i.e., discover kinship and the Central European *dimension*, when they live in Toronto or Berlin. This perspective of the locus of observation (a constructivist postulate) is, then, obviously an important aspect of the construction of a Central European culture *landscape*, and this is also the case when scholars study the cultures of the region.

In scholarship difficulties arise, when Central European culture is to be explained with examples. As introduced above, I propose that the exemplification of the notion of Central European culture ought to be executed with and within the framework of comparative cultural studies (with the framework's built-in methodology, the systemic and empirical approach), followed by the notion of Central European culture as (post)colonial »in-between peripherality«. ¹⁸ The next step, then, is the application of the proposed theoretical underpinnings. For this, I present a brief study of memoirs by second-generation Canadian and American Jews of Central European parentage, whose texts contain much material supporting the notion of an imagined Central European culture. In turn, this exemplification supports the primary proposal, namely that there exists a Central European culture, and in this case, most interestingly, twice removed: in time (second generation) and in space (North America).

There is also a third component in such an equation: the particular combination of the Jewish and Central European. In my view, Jews living in the region – orthodox or assimilated or anywhere in between – represented the quintessence of Central European culture, until the Holocaust »amputated« their cultures by anti-Semitism and genocide. What I mean is, that neither German culture nor any of the national cultures of Central Europe could be lived and understood without the history and the presence of Jewries and their contributions in any area or walks of life, be that literature, the visual and plastic arts, music, or engineering, medicine, business and economics, etc.

Before I present samples of Jewish memoirs about Central Europe, a brief excursion into the question of the image of Central European matters in English-language culture may be useful. From classics such as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* to 19th-century bestsellers in North America such as Ralph Connor's *The Foreigner*, etc., the image of cultures from the region have not been presented, generally speaking, in a positive context. Particularly in the period of high immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries, American and Canadian representations in literature and social discourse (and consequently, their perceptions) can be found in negative and racist contexts, often arguing that the »sheepskin-clad peasant« from Poland, the Ukraine, or Hungary – all listed at various points of entry in the United States and Canada as Austrians from the Austro-Hungarian empire – will not be able to adapt to the superior culture of America or Canada.¹⁹ Similarly, since the Second World War in particular in films such as about the Transylvanian/Hungarian/Romanian (e.g., *Dracula*), the Hungarian (e.g., *My Fair Lady*), the Austrian (e.g., *Sissy*, *Sound of Music*), have shaped much of the public perception. Although it is difficult to gauge the frequency and contents of these themes, it is perhaps safe to say that in English-language culture(s) Central European themes have become more frequent of late as well as less negatively presented. In the last few years, examples include such texts of prose fiction as Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog* (1992), Jill Tweedle's *Eating Children* (1993), Kazuo Ishi-

20 Tötösy de Zepetnek, St.: Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*: History, and the Other. In: CLCWeb 1, no. 4 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-4/totosy99-2.html>.

21 Cf. Smith, Dinitia: A Spinner of Spy Novels Whose Heroes Still Fight the Nazis. In: *The New York Times*, 26.02.2001, p. B1, p. B6.

22 For my purposes the text – transl. by Christopher C. Wilson and Katharina M. Wilson, and publ. in 1992 with the title *Fateless* – in fact belongs to «contemporary» Jewish memoirs in English about Central Europe.

guro's *The Unconsoled* (1995), Milan Kundera's novels (e.g., *Petro*, *Pichova*), Tamas Dobozý's *Doggone: A Novel* (1998), Josef Skvorecký's *Two Murders in My Double Life* (1999), Jill Paton Walsh's *A Desert in Bohemia* (2000), Simone Zelitch's *Louisa* (2000), Alan Furst's *Kingdom of Shadows: A Novel* (2000), Jody Shields's *The Fig Eater: A Novel* (2000), John Wray's *The Right Hand of Sleep* (2001), or narratives by public intellectuals such as Michael Ignatieff's *Scar Tissue* (1993) or personal narratives such as Eva Hoffmann's *Exit into History: A Journey through the New Eastern Europe* (1993) and Modris Eksteins's *Walking Since Daybreak: A Story of Eastern Europe, World War II and the Heart of Our Century* (1999), or in films such as *The English Patient*²⁰, etc.

Criticism published in mainstream media such as *The New York Times* accords high literary and cultural value to some of these texts, i.e. to Furst's novel²¹ and Shields' first novel. Tweedle received excellent reviews and endorsements, and Fischer's novel got several awards, such as the *Betty Trask Award* (1992). A brief note about Shields' *The Frog Eater*: The author describes in her novel Central European culture truly »imagined« and with much of the stereotypes attributed to this culture. What is »imagined« is, for example, that in Shield's Austria of 1900 one would be able to order Hungarian dishes in Hungarian restaurants in Vienna, the daughter of a Hungarian landowner would be married to a police inspector in Vienna, and that the Hungarian gentry would know intimately the culture and customs of the Gypsies, etc.; situations, that are only possible in a Central Europe of today. Such fictionalizations are acceptable (I guess) owing to poetic license, and because the author describes a Central European culture, »imagined«, indeed. Nevertheless, the author's (and the publisher's editors') oversight of spelling is, while of little or no importance to the readership at large, irritating: Hungarian terms and names are misspelled throughout, »Erszébet« instead of Erzsébet, »Rosza« instead of Rózsa, »József« instead of József, etc.

In contemporary American and Canadian literature, memoir writing is a genre with a significant and growing corpus. In Central Europe, too, since 1989 there has been a large output of memoirs. In Hungary, i.e. – although of course memoirs have also been published before 1989 – since then, memoirs of all possible persuasions appeared in large numbers. I am especially partial to Imre Kertész's *Sorstalanság* (1975).²² Within the genre of memoirs about the Holocaust, *Fateless* is of particular significance because it predates representations of the Shoah with »laughter«, as in Lina Wertmüller's film *Seven Beauties* (1975) or Nicola Paviani's film *Life is Beautiful* (1997). Kertész's bitter-sweet, at times biting, irony laced with intelligent humor is a masterpiece, although among scholars of Holocaust literature it would have detractors, precisely because of the »laughter« the author describes in the concentration camp, and the humor he attributes to life under the most horrific circumstances. Another text I find of particular poignancy is André Stein's *Hidden Children: Forgotten Survivors of the Holocaust* (1993), a collection of oral histories as told by child survivors from Central and East Europe. Among recent Holocaust (auto)biographical histories with a Central European background similar to those I discuss below, of note is Eugene L. Pogany's *In My Brother's Image: Twin Brothers Separated by Faith after the Holocaust* (2000), the story of a Hungarian Jewish family and their conversion to Catholicism, their conscious assimilation into Hungarian culture and urban Central European society, and the Holocaust and Anca Vlasopolos's *No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement* (2000), a fictional autobiography of a family of Hungarian, Jewish Romanian, and Romanian Greek intellectuals, their lives, and the lives of their relatives and friends in communist Romania.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are memoirs by the former upper class, whose members were, in the rule, patriotic and nationalist, anti-Semitic and conservative, while at the same time very much Central European in their outlook towards Austro-German culture and with family, friends, and contacts over the whole region. A good example of this category of memoirs is Jenő Koltai's *Egy honvédtiszt visszaemlékezései. Korkép a XX. Századból (Memoirs of an Officer: A Portrait of the Twentieth Century)* (1989; not translated into English). While resonating with much nostalgia, Koltai's writing is void of emotion and suggests an emotionally dry, truncated life. On the other hand, he represents most aspects of a patriotic Hungarian awareness of his Central Europeanness, with commitment to honoring the codes of the upper-class bourgeois officer serving in the country's professional army. What is fascinating in the text is the author's description of a Central European landscape of culture and social life in the interwar period of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany.

23 Willett, John: Is There a Central European Culture? In: *Daedalus: Journal of the American Acad. of Arts and Sciences* 119, no. 1 (1990) [Thematic Iss.: Eastern Europe – Central Europe – Europe], pp. 1-15.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

25 Cf. above; cf. also Braham ____; Johnston, William M.: *The Austrian Mind*. Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. 1972.

26 Cf. also Ozsváth, Zsuzsanna: Radnóti, Celan, and Aesthetic Shifts in Central European Holocaust Poetry. In: Tötösy 2002, pp. 51-70.

27 Salamon, Julie: *The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place*. New York: Random House 1996.

28 Furst, Desider/ Furst, Lilian R.: *Home is Somewhere Else: Autobiography in Two Voices*. New York: State Univ. of New York 1994.

29 Kalman Naves, Elaine: *Journey to Vaja: Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's UP 1996.

30 Suleiman, Susan Rubin: *Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Pr. 1996.

31 Denes, Magda: *Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1997.

32 Kalman, Judith: *The County of Birches*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre 1998.

33 Salamon 1996, p. 6.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

35 Cf. Portuges ____; Suleiman, Susan Rubin: *Central Europe, Jewish Family History, and Sunshine*. In: Tötösy 2002, pp. 169-188.

36 Salamon 1996, p. 205.

37 Cf. Braham ____; Ozsváth, Zsuzsanna: Radnóti, Celan, and Aesthetic Shifts in Central European Holocaust Poetry. In: Tötösy 2002, pp. 51-70.

38 Naves 1996, p. 15; on this, cf. also Ozsváth 2002; Suleiman 2002.

John Willett writes in his paper *Is There a Central European Culture?*²³ that the elements of a new Central European culture must come from even farther a field than they did before Hitler and Stalin. We certainly cannot expect them to depend on the spontaneous German-Jewish-Yiddish tradition that once seemed to link the comedian Peischacke Burstein in Vilnius with the writer Ettore Schmitz in Trieste: However unforgettable, the source is barred, buried under the masonry of the great concentration camp memorials. But the essence of mid-Europe surely is that its cultural inspiration must come from both, East and West, and its role be to test ideas against one another, and use the result in its own creativity.²⁴

Willett touches on several issues pertinent to my line of thought. The importance of Jewish culture in its varied forms on and in Central Europe is a given.²⁵ However, while I understand the history of Central European Jewry as tragic as Willet does, I do not find it »barred« and »buried«. ²⁶ Instead, I understand Central European Jewries as a quintessential synthesis and expression of Central European culture very much present and with a future.

As proposed in the perspective of a Central European culture and as seen from a locus removed in time and space, I discuss briefly Desider Furst and Lilian R. Furst's *Home Is Somewhere Else: Autobiography in Two Voices* (1994)²⁷, Julie Salamon's *The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place* (1996)²⁸, Elaine Kalman Naves's *Journey to Vaja: Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (1996)²⁹, Susan Rubin Suleiman's *Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook* (1996)³⁰, Magda Denes's *Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War* (1997)³¹, and Judith Kalman's *The County of Birches* (1998).³²

In a geo-cultural context, Salamon's *The Net of Dreams* is perhaps the most »Central European« novel. Her idea and research began after reading about Steven Spielberg's plans to produce *Schindler's List*³³ in 1993, and traveling to Poland and other areas of Central East Europe such as Huszt, a former Hungarian, now Ukrainian town. Salamon's description leading into the history of the mixture of nations is intriguing itself:

This was the land of the shtetl – and of the Gypsies, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Ukrainians – an ignorant backwater that had been annexed by the USSR after World War II. Now Communism was finished and the place where my parents were from had been reshuffled again. Their birthplace had lost the status of affiliation with Czechoslovakia or the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.³⁴

Significant within this brief excerpt is the reference to Czechoslovakia (the interwar period) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1919, and thus the setting of the notion of Central Europe, geographically and culturally. The Salamon family history, like that of Susan Rubin Suleiman or that of the Sonnenscheins' in István Szabó's film *Sunshine*³⁵, stretches across Central and East Europe in time, space, and cultural parameters. It includes the particularities of their education (the Austro-German *Gymnasium* and university), their knowledge of languages and cultures, and the necessities of manoeuvring from one cultural context to another but altogether being in a Central European space. Salamon's interpretations and explanations of matters and things Central European – be those in the particular Slovak, Hungarian, Ruthenian, Jewish, or Czech – extend over much detail. For instance, at one point she explains a specific instance of the usage in Hungarian of the familiar (*te*) and polite (*maga*) forms of address and other forms of address they used such as the Ukrainian-Czech mixture of *zlotik* (»little golden one«) in their social and individual contexts.³⁶ Salamon's narrative of memory concentrates on family and family history, through which the memory of the horror of the Holocaust runs. Yet, the Central European cultural space influences the family's history and the histories of all individual members within the entire book, and it's narratives involve the reader not only due to its historical evidence but also as evidence for the culture and literature of the region.

Elaine Kalman Naves' *Journey to Vaja: Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* is the most historical novel I want to introduce in this article (and it also has the least mistakes with diacritics and translation of phrases and terms). The Jewish-Hungarian families whose history is told in the book, the Schwarz-Székács, the Weinbergers, the Rochlitz, etc., belonged to that stratum of Jews in Hungary who assimilated and became members of the educated upper-bourgeoisie of the country³⁷; most of the author's male family members were members of the Austro-Hungarian officer corps (the *crème de la crème* of pre-First World War and interwar society), government officials, landowners, industrialists, but also belonged to the urban intelligentsia, like, i.e., Aggie Békés, who earned a doctorate in comparative literatu-



39 For the Jewish nobility of Hungary, cf. McCagg, William O., Jr.: *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*. Boulder/Col.: East European Monogr. 1972; Lukacs _____, p. 91ff.; cf. also Molnár, Miklós/Reszler, André (Eds.): *La Génie de l'Autriche-Hongrie. Etat, Société, Culture*. Paris: PU de France 1989 and Reszler ____; the above mentioned autobiography by Koltai contains descriptions with regard to the assimilation of Hungary's ethnic German population.

re from the University of Debrecen in the 1930s (section of photographs, n.p.). Jews in Hungary underwent perhaps the most widespread and deepest possible process of assimilation, for the reason that Kalman Naves describes as »during the forging of Magyar nationalism, they cast their lot whole heartedly with that of the emerging Magyar nation – only one of the many ethnic groups in the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire which included Slovaks, Ukrainians, Slovenes, and many other nationalities. Even the orthodox among Hungarian Jews described themselves with self-conscious pride as Magyars of the Israelite faith«.38 In many instances, assimilation and magyarization resulted in access of numerous Jewish-Hungarian families to both, non-titled nobility and to the ranks of the aristocracy, and the large numbers of the urban strata of Hungarian Jews created much of the country's industrialization. Although assimilation and »voluntary« magyarization occurred to all of Hungary's national minorities such as Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, etc., in the case of Hungarian Jews the results of cultural and emotional assimilation explain much of the proposed character of Central Europeanness of the region's Jewries.39

Magda Denes's *Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War* is a doubly sad book in view of its author's recent death in 1996 (all other authors of the memoirs under discussion here are alive today). The story of Denes's family is particularly poignant because of her father's abandon of his wife and daughter in 1939. The story of this Jewish-Hungarian family, again in the context of its position as educated upper bourgeoisie, is of particular interest for my argument of Central Europeanness, because the story unfolds in »travel«. What I mean is the telling of the tale when Magda Denes – after surviving the Holocaust in hiding – flees Hungary in 1946 with her mother and grandmother and how she perceives and experiences life as a refugee with and among all the other nationalities in the refugee camps. The narrative contains much reference and description of the self-confidence of the educated and cultured Central European (a theme in itself). Here is an excerpt:

I always suspected Ervin of having a bit of the prole [proletarian] in him. Anyway, now he wants to emigrate to Palestine with her, and he wants to fight for a Jewish state. I don't even know what that means. Jews are intellectuals, not farmers or soldiers.40

Denes eventually ends up in New York, where she becomes professor of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at Adelphi University.

Susan Rubin Suleiman's *Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook* is bitter-sweet in many instances of her narrative of recollection of Budapest life and death during the war and the Holocaust. The book's title itself is intriguing, and it is similar to Tibor Fischer's (another second-generation Hungarian) *Under the Frog* (1992), in that it contains a translation from the Hungarian. Fischer's un-English *Under the Frog* is a translation of the Hungarian phrase describing when one is in bad circumstances (as in quality of life): *a béka segge alatt* (»under the arse of a frog«). Suleiman's *Motherbook* is a translation of *anyakönyv*, the official name of one's birth certificate in Hungary and a term of nostalgia and patriotism in Hungarian literature and even in general discourse. Thus, the title of the book sets the scene, the author's search and re-discovery of her Hungarian background and history. In the first chapter, *Prologue: Forgetting Budapest*, Suleiman describes her escape from Hungary as a 10-year-old, when the border was still open to Czechoslovakia. After stops in Koice and Bratislava – Kassa and Pozsony/Pressburg – the Rubin family of three arrives in Vienna, free. After immigrating to the United States, Susan Rubin becomes an academic with a Ph.D. in French literature, and lives in clear distance to her cultural background in the American melting pot. Although with a brief interest in Hungary during the 1956 Revolution and its aftermath of Hungarian refugees arriving in the United States, it is only in the early 1980s – upon the illness of her mother, her own divorce, and the stress of raising two sons as a single mother – that »Zsuzsa« (the Hungarian version of Suleiman's first name) takes new interest in Hungary, Poland (her mother's background), and her unresolved past. After the dissolution of communism in 1989, she is invited to Budapest as a guest professor and she spends an extended period there in 1993. In Budapest – and it is in these chapters where the cultural reading I am interested in is written – Suleiman immerses herself in the intellectual life of scholars, writers, and artists and makes many interesting observations. While her descriptions of life and letters in Budapest may be uninteresting and at times contrite to readers familiar with Central Europe and Hungary, they are valuable for North American readers.

40 Denes, Magda: *Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1997, p. 147.

41 Suleiman 2002.

42 Brussig, Thomas: *Helden wie wir*. Berlin: Volk & Welt 1995. [Transl. by John Brownjohn as *Heroes Like Us* and publ. in 1997].

43 Esterházy, Péter: *Kis Magyar Pornográfia*. Bevezetés a szépirodalomba. Budapest: Magvető 1984. [Transl. by Judith Sollosy as *A Little Hungarian Pornography* and publ. in 1995].

44 Cf. Grant, Colin B.: *Literary Communication from Consensus to Rupture: Practice and Theory in Honecker's GDR*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 1995; Mayer-Iszandy, Claudia: *Between Resistance and Affirmation: Christa Wolf and German Unification*. In: Tötösy/ Gunew 1995, pp. 813-835; Pape, Walter (Ed.): *1870/71-1989/90 – German Unifications and the Change of Literary Discourse*. Berlin: de Gruyter 1993; Spieker, Sven: *The Postutopian Subject in Soviet and East German Postmodernism: Andrei Bitov and Christa Wolf*. In: *Comp. Lit. Stud.* 32, iss. 4 (1995), pp. 479-496.

Interestingly, there is one instance, where Suleiman falls prey to cultural nationalism. In her case, this could perhaps be better described in terms of »enthusiasm« and over-valuation of things Hungarian:

I felt elated by the beauty of the city. »It really is a great capital; it really can be compared to Paris.« I told myself as the cable car rose above the river.⁴¹

Desider and Lilian R. Furst's *Home Is Somewhere Else: Autobiography in Two Voices* is a dual autobiography. For her book, Lilian Furst edited autobiographical writings her father left her and added her own recollections in some chapters.

Desider Furst was born in Hungary, studied dental surgery from 1919 to 1926 at the University of Vienna, became a naturalized Austrian citizen in 1928, and practiced dentistry in Vienna until 1938. He left Austria with his wife, also a dentist, Dr. Sári Furst-Neufeld and daughter, Lilian, after the German annexation in 1938, to settle in England. The Fürsts, similar to the Salamons and the family of Susan Rubin (Suleiman), had relations all over Central and East Europe, including Poland, Hungary, and Austria. Lilian's parents specialized in dental surgery already in Vienna, they were educated with active interest in literature, theatre, and the arts.

Their families and relatives suffered the Holocaust everywhere. Yet, Lilian and Desider Furst's memoirs are imbued with nostalgia for the lost world that was theirs before the Shoah, a world that their memories recover and dress in sunshine.

In addition to their value within memoir literature, the above texts are seminal descriptions of culture, history, and everyday life of pre-Holocaust Central Europe. These memories of real events are formations of an (imagined) Central Europe, a landscape with a culture of its own. Cumulatively, the texts reclaim a world destroyed and, by preserving and transporting its images to today, they locate a contemporary Central European culture. While these memoirs suggest and demonstrate variably similar perspectives of a Central European culture, they are also inseparable from the Holocaust and the history of the genocide of Jews remains part of Central European culture and its postcolonial situation.

From the sizable corpus of post-1989 cultural production, Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* (1995)⁴² and Péter Esterházy's *Kis Magyar pornográfia. Bevezetés a szépirodalomba* (1984)⁴³ serve my second set of examples of Central European culture. In Brussig's case, the inclusion of former East Germany in the designation of Central European culture needs to be explained, however. The in-between situation of former East Germany obtained immediate relevance after the changes of 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet centre, as follows. The historical as well as current cultural, political, economic, and other arguments for closer ties among all Central and East European countries are largely related to German and French economic and cultural influences as I suggested previously. There are, however, further differentiations. While Germany is the main centre in its economic, political, linguistic, and cultural influence on the region, France exerts only limited economic or political influence in some countries such as Romania and Poland and France exerts significant cultural influence in these countries, including their literature (recently, Bulgaria even joined the *Group of Francophone Nations*). A further influence is of increasing importance: In its culture as well as in its language, the United States have begun to exert significant techno- and popular-cultural influence after the fall of Soviet colonialism in 1989, as well as limited economic and industrial impact on the region. The designation of former East Germany (I refer to it as »Eastern Germany«) as both, a Central European cultural *and* as an in-between peripheral space, rests on two observations: Culturally and historically, Eastern Germany retained many characteristics similar to those in Poland or Hungary, i.e., such as the persistence of features of certain feudal characteristics associated with the »*Junkerstaat*«. On the other hand, Eastern Germany was, similarly to the other countries of the region under Soviet colonialism, a communist and totalitarian state. And third, there is a growing sense that the »*Wende*« brought more than an acceptable level of economic as well as cultural colonialism over Eastern Germany exerted by Western Germany. An internal peripheralization is occurring within the new Germany, represented, i.e., by the perspective of the »*Wessies*« and the »*Ossies*« including an economic as well as a cultural colonization from former West Germany towards former East Germany.⁴⁴ Thus, owing to the recent feudal past of the area (*Junkerstaat*), its some forty-years-long Soviet colonization and communist history, and its current colonial situation vis-à-vis former West Germany suggest that Eastern Germany is an integral and functional part of the Central European cultural landscape.

45 Cf. Tötösy 1998, pp. 121-172; Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven: Bibliography of Studies in the Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture. In: CLCWeb (Library) (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library.html>.

46 Cf. Upchurch, Michael: Nazi and Stasi: The Soundtrack. In: The New York Times Book Rev., 21.12.1997, p. 11f.

47 Cf. Tötösy 1998, pp. 121-172; Imre 2002.

48 Cf. Imre 2002.

49 Brussig 1995, p. 1 [transl. by St.T.].

50 Brussig 2002, p. 6 [transl. by St.T.]; further on Esterházy cf. also Tötösy 1998, p. 140f.

51 Brussig 2002, p. 156.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., p. 158.

I argue that contemporary Central and East European cultures show (post)colonial characteristics, as it feeds on and is influenced by the cultures of Western centres of power (economic and political as well as cultural), while it also manifests the effects and residues of ›filtered colonialism‹ from the period of Soviet colonialism; they are thus ›locations‹ of ›peripheral in-between‹. In particular, the literatures of the regions show all elements of the (post)colonial situation, and can be read as »narratives of change« with characteristics as follows. The emergence of the erotic and the sexual in literary texts albeit from a strong patriarchal perspective; the shift in the social status of the male author and its repercussions apparent in literature, and the observation that the themes of urbanity, memory, and sexuality/eroticism are manifested prominently in the texts as »subjective sensibility«.45

Brussig's novel belongs to the genre of post-1989 *Wende-Literatur* along with such novels as Günter Grass's *Ein weites Feld* (1995), Ingo Schramm's *Fitcher's Blau* (1996), Detlef Opitz' *Klio, ein Wirbel um L.* (1996), Monika Maron's *Animal triste* (1996), or Christa Wolf's *Medea* (1996).

Brussig's *Heroes Like Us* is an irreverent novel.46 The author was born in 1965, and lives in former East Berlin. The novel contains all features of the above mentioned »narrative of change«: urbanity, memoir textuality, and sexual narrative. The narrative of urbanity in the novel is in the tradition of the »Berlin novel« (e.g., Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*).

The significance of the sexual narrative is not foremost in specific passages. Rather, the author uses sexual imagery and language for his historicization of urbanity and the politics of both, before and after the ›Wende‹, in an ironic and often satirical context and mood. Memoir textuality is a main feature of the novel, but this is somewhat dissimilar from what I observed in the case of Hungary and Romania, as its structure and content is not far from the ›Bildungsroman‹ and the rather German concept of ›Vergangenheitsbewältigung‹, here applied to the history of the East German state. A most interesting feature of the text is the authors ironic and again, more often satirical treatment of Christa Wolf, a prominent author of former East Germany. Here, the author is, theoretically speaking, in a systemic mode because he reflects on Wolf's stature and literary significance as well as her performance during and shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Whether the novel also manifests the characteristics of the patriarchal male voice is subject to further analysis but preliminarily I would suggest that this is not, or at least not as strongly in the case as in other Central European literatures, such as of the Hungarians Endre Kükorelly's and Péter Esterházy's or Romanian Mircea Cărtărescu's texts.47

Along with Péter Nádas, whose *Emlékiratok könyve* (*A Book of Memories*, 1997, transl. by Ivan Sanders and Imre Goldstein) may earn him the Nobel Prize in literature, Esterházy is recognized as one of Central Europe's and Hungary's prominent postmodern writers. Nádas's *Book of Memories* and Esterházy's *A Little Hungarian Pornography* or *She Loves Me* (1995), similar to Brussig's novel, contain all features of the categories of the proposed »narrative of change« in Central European literature. Esterházy's texts are prominently and explicitly sexual and with an unabashedly patriarchal point of view48 and Brussig's text is similar both, thematically and in descriptions of relationships and women. Irony, often in conjunction with history and sexuality and women, is a foremost characteristic of the texts of both authors. For instance, when Esterházy uses irony and satire about Hungarian historical sanctities such as Prince Ferenc Rákóczi, he writes: »The tempo: take it slow, take it slow, good Master Rákóczi and she does her pleasure as if her gullet were her clitoris«49 or »Then, flinging caution to the wind, Klára began to sob. My Husband is himself undecided. He says he loves me, and he's telling the truth, I know he is! The other day, too, he comes bolting out of the john and without prior notice says how while he was pissing, holding his dick, it hit him, he loves me«.50 The novel is an accumulation of memoir material in loosely fitted sequential portions. Interesting is how the author connects his personal memories growing up in communist Hungary to the overall history of the country, more often than not through relating both aspects of memory to a sense and historical perception of the history of the Habsburg loyalist Esterházy family. The author is concerned with several issues characteristic of the »narratives of change« such as the focus on the male voice. For instance, the book's first section's first sentence reads as follows: »Today's prose writer is a dour, endearing figure of a man«51 and all sections portray maleness imbued with sexuality: »[A]nd while he watches the red-haired monkey taking possession of the frightfully beautiful princess who puts up almost no resistance at all he grabs his own member«,52 or »[t]hey stopped, whereupon he noticed how the woman had inadvertently spread her legs so her thighs would not rub together in the sweltering heat.«53 At the same time, the sections describe a sense of the social relevance of authorship of fiction: »I have no



54 Ibid., p. 157.

love for this intoxicating, loathsome and maddening world and I am bent on changing it.«⁵⁴
The writer's life is text:

55 Ibid.

Today's prose writer is the kind of man whose life is the kind of life that doesn't progress from one place to the next. Consequently, the novel does not progress from here to there either.⁵⁵

Brussig's novel about life in East Berlin is especially poignant to readers who lived under communism. References and descriptions such as the Berlin adolescent's yearning for Western objects and things like glossy magazines, unavailable in the countries under Soviet and communist hegemony at the time, stand out and the flavors of everyday life in East Berlin are no different from those in Budapest or Prague. Finally, one aspect of the »narratives of change« ought to be briefly referred to: Although dissimilar to Hungarian or Romanian literature where sexual language has not existed until recently while in German-language literature this is no novelty, Brussig's use of sexual language and imagery confirms this category of the proposed characteristics of Central and East European narrative.

The above brief applications of the proposed framework of comparative cultural studies in the study of Central and East European literature serve as examples for the argument that there exists a Central European culture based on variable similarities. In the first application the notion is evident in memoirs of second-generation North Americans of Central European background, while in the second example the notion is found in textual characteristics and thematic similarities found in texts from the corpus of Eastern German and Hungarian literature.

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