

# **CLCWEB: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND CULTURE: A WWW JOURNAL**

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1 Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven (Ed.): Comparative Central European Culture Books in Comparative Cultural Studies 1. West Lafayette: Purdue UP (forthcoming in January) 2002. 220 pages, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$ 24.95. ISBN 1-55753-240-0.

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2 Fox, Patricia D.: What's Past is Prologue: Imagining the Socialist Nation in Cuba and in Hungary. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal 1.1 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-1/fox99.html>.

3 Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven: Book Review of Susan Rubin Suleiman's *Budapest Diary* (Nebraska UP 1997) and Richard Teleky's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (Washington UP 1997). In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal 1.1 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-1/books-99-1.html>.

4 Deltcheva, Roumiana: East Central Europe as a Politically Correct Scapegoat: The Case of Bulgaria. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal 1.2 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-2/deltcheva-99.html>.

5 Fáaby, Andrea: A Comparative Analysis of Text and Music and Gender and Audience in *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal 1.4 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-4/faby-99.html>.

## **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal**

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWW Journal* is an online quarterly, also published by Purdue at <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/>: the journal publishes new work in the humanities and social sciences in comparative literature, cultural studies, and comparative cultural studies; it maintains a Library with extensive and selected bibliographies, an international directory of scholars, pertinent web links, and it operates a moderated listserv for news and announcements. Comparative cultural studies is a contextual approach in the study of culture in all of its products and processes; its theoretical and methodological framework is built on tenets borrowed from the discipline of comparative literature and cultural studies and from a range of thought including (radical) constructivism, communication theories, systems theories, literary and culture theory; in comparative cultural studies focus is on theory and method as well as application and on the study of process(es) rather than on the »what(s) of the object(s) of study; in comparative cultural studies metaphorical argumentation and description are discouraged. For more detailed descriptions of work in comparative cultural studies, see <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-3/totosy99.html> and [http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/totosy\(constructivism\).html](http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/totosy(constructivism).html). Purdue University Press publishes single-authored as well as collected volumes in the series.

## **Published Articles 1999-2001**

Patricia D. Fox's article, *What's Past is Prologue: Imagining the Socialist Nation in Cuba and in Hungary*<sup>2</sup>, examines the symbolic mooring of Cuban and Hungarian identity, recuperated Caliban from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and an ever conflicted Faustus/Adam from Imre Madách's *Az ember tragédiája*, respectively. Despite serial cosmological fragmentations and political upheaval, the present analysis holds that production and reproduction of these founding figures in the process of imagining the socialist nation represent an ongoing litigation of meaning. This process then conserves a marked thematic continuity through temporal conceptions, totality of exegesis, the mix of rational and mythical, and the recoding of past symbols to serve the present reality and to indirectly realign the past and prophesy the future. Beyond the formative and transformative points of similarity between the two cases, the essay discusses culturally specific divergences and the impact of differing experience and mentalities on literary and filmic expression. In conclusion, the study first offers a tentative model of socialist nation, positing a framework within which to understand and complicate Cuban and Hungarian *sui generis* patterns and then describes in the more universal context of narrating the nation those practices and characteristics common to that genre.

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek presents his book reviews of Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Budapest Diary* (University of Nebraska Press 1997) and Richard Teleky, *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (University of Washington Press 1997).<sup>3</sup>

Roumiana Deltcheva's article, *East Central Europe as a Politically Correct Scapegoat: The Case of Bulgaria*<sup>4</sup>, analyses the mechanisms of image construction of East Central Europe in the West, taking Bulgaria as a case study as seen in literary and filmic texts. A historical overview of literary and theoretical texts which deal with the cultural semiosphere of Bulgaria is presented to demonstrate that contrary to widely held perceptions in North American »politically correct« scholarship, Europe is not a homogeneous cultural unity. In fact, a clear centre-periphery situation is established and delineated along the geographical axis West/East. In the post-communist period, preconceived notions from earlier times continue to dominate, sustained by the dominant cultural discourses in East Central Europe.

Andrea Fáaby discusses in her article, *A Comparative Analysis of Text and Music and Gender and Audience in Duke Bluebeard's Castle*<sup>5</sup>, the image of Bluebeard as a metaphor for gender relations. Béla Bartók's opera and its libretto represent a prime example of the metaphor that in turn can be found in a range of text types, from fairy tales through novels to films. In the article, Fáaby analyses Bartók's contribution to the metaphor, namely with his opera, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. She relates the opera to the text of the opera's libretto, written by film theoretician Béla Balázs, and places her analysis in the larger historical framework of audience research in modernity. The analysis reveals that in a pronounced misogynistic artistic climate of the time and working from a libretto whose tragic ending denies transcendence to the female character of the opera, Bartók's opera can be understood as the representation of simplistic domesticity where the real story remains un-mediated and un-narrated.

6 Deltcheva, Roumiana: Western Mediations in Reevaluating the Communist Past: A Comparative Analysis of Gothár's *Time Stands Still* and Andonov's *Yesterday*. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWWeb Journal 1.4 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-4/deltcheva99-2.html>.

7 Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven: Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, 'History', and the Other. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWWeb Journal 1.4 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-4/totosy99-2.html>.

8 Kozak, Kristof Jacek: Comparative Literature in Slovenia. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWWeb Journal 2.4 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb00-4/kozak00.html>.

9 Lutzkanova-Vassileva, Albena: Testimonial Poetry in East European Post-Totalitarian Literature. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWWeb Journal 3.1 (1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb01-1/lutzkanova-vassileva01.html>.

10 Imre, Anikó: Gender, Literature, and Film in Contemporary East Central European Culture. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWWeb Journal 3.1(1999), <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb01-1/imre01.html>.

Roumiana Deltcheva's article, *Western Mediations in Reevaluating the Communist Past: A Comparative Analysis of Gothár's Time Stands Still and Andonov's Yesterday*<sup>6</sup>, offers a comparative analysis of two films, Peter Gothár's *Time Stands Still* and Ivan Andonov's *Yesterday*. Both films appeared in the 1980s, in Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, and were highly acclaimed by the critics and the audience. Both films deal with the Communist past of these two countries. In her analysis, Deltcheva's adopts the perspective of »in-between peripherality«, a particular manifestation of the post-colonial paradigm in its application to East Central and Central Europe. The two films use similar strategies to suggest the specific position that the countries belonging to the Soviet sphere of political influence possessed during the forty years of communist rule. Ironically, the films completed prior to the Changes of 1989 present a much more vivid representation of these processes than anything else that has since been produced in the region.

In his article, *Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient, 'History', and the Other*<sup>7</sup>, Steven Tötösy discusses the historical background of Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient* (1992). The historical background and its analysis extend to selected aspects of Anthony Minghella's and Michael Ondaatje's adaptation of the novel to film (1996) and the ensuing controversy after the release of the film. From the historical background Tötösy designates as the »Almásy theme« of the novel and the film, he relates Ondaatje's engagement of the protagonist – Central European Hungarian László Almásy – to the notion of the 'Other' as a historical and fictional concept. Tötösy argues that Ondaatje's particular rendition of the notion of the Other provides venues for a specific understanding of the historical background of the novel (the »real« Almásy) as well as its fictional presentation (the »Almásy theme«). The article also responds to the pronounced interest in the novel's and the film's protagonist and his »real« history, internationally evident after the release of the film in 1996.

In his article, *Comparative Literature in Slovenia*<sup>8</sup>, Kristof Jacek Kozak provides a historical overview of the practice of theory in the discipline of comparative literature in Slovenia. Despite its small size and relative low profile, Slovenia is taken as an exemplar within comparative literature scholarship. Kozak observes that the development of comparative literature in Slovenia may be characterized by an attempt to both arbitrate and mediate between distinct poles. On the one hand, Slovenian scholarship has felt the need to secure or determine itself in accordance with its own interests and concerns. On the other hand, it has recognized the need to be in accord with various movements and determinations across national borders. This situation is primarily mediated via the accounts of Janko Kos, a prominent scholar of the field. Via Kos, Kozak traces the origins of comparative literature to various theoretical movements and counter movements, as practiced by principle theoreticians. Whilst a methodological pluralism has emerged, there is resistance to an »anything goes« approach in Kos' thought as well as by Slovene comparatists in general. This situation is highlighted by the occurrence of recurrent issues, questions, and problems, and the article converges around movements between distinct legacies and poles.

In her article, *Testimonial Poetry in East European Post-Totalitarian Literature*<sup>9</sup>, Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva reexamines the belief that postmodern literature and deconstructive writing have parted literary and theoretical discourse from reality, thereby obstructing and annihilating our access to history. Lutzkanova-Vassileva exemplifies her prognosis in an inquiry into post-totalitarian and postmodern Bulgarian literature and its texts of poetry. Born in the turmoil of communism's debacle, the analysis is an attempt to illustrate that, contrary to denying reference, postmodernism solely rejects the reduction of reference to a world that is perceptible and cognitively masterable. Rethinking what many have seen as a self-referential literature, with the break between language and reality – its leading stylistic principle, Lutzkanova-Vassileva seeks to establish that in the very decomposition of artistic language, in the demise of its capacity to refer to phenomenal reality and endow it with meaning, the truth of another, so far suppressed reality emerges. This, she claims, is the reality of crisis and catastrophe, the reality of minds on the brink of disintegration, the reality of both historical and personal invalidation. Recording the stories of failing minds and chronicling breakdown after breakdown, the often incoherent, almost clinical discourse of the postmodern text in Bulgarian literature, Lutzkanova-Vassileva argues, provides powerful testimony to a climactic moment in contemporary history.

In her article, *Gender, Literature, and Film in Contemporary East Central European Culture*<sup>10</sup>, Anikó Imre discusses gender, literature, and film in Hungary in the context of East Central European national cultures of the 1980s and 1990s. Anikó Imre analyses the analogous gender structures that underlie both nation and literature in these transitional cultures. She challenges both social science studies of post-communist transitions and studies of East Central European literatures and cultures for their traditional neglect of gendered desire as a political factor. Thereby, Imre adopts a deconstructionist, feminist, and post-colonial approach to Hungarian »postmodernist« literature and film, which, similar to other East Central European cultures, combine an intense interest in the female and the feminine with the refusal of political commitment conveyed in poetic forms. Imre investigates the interrelationships among these features in order to point to a male intellectual culture emasculated by colonization, whose use of »poetic pornography« disguises an effort to defend patriarchal privileges threatened by the effects of the transition.