PURDUE UNIVERSITY PRESS <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

The *Library Series* of the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access quarterly in the humanities and the social sciences *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* publishes scholarship in the humanities and social sciences following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the *Library Series* are 1) articles, 2) books, 3) bibliographies, 4) resources, and 5) documents. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Article

Constructivism and Comparative Cultural Studies
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/ccsconstructivism>

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek

Abstract: Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek introduces in "Constructivism and Comparative Cultural Studies" the beginnings of a theoretical framework for the study of culture and literature. The epistemological background of the proposed framework of comparative cultural studies is built principally on Siegfried J. Schmidt's work in radical constructivism. After the presentation of relevant histories and the tenets of several schools of constructivism applicable for the proposed framework of comparative cultural studies, Tötösy de Zepetnek presents a ten-point preliminary outline of comparative cultural studies. Based on constructivist tenets including constructivist ethics, social responsibility, and a contextual (empirical and systems theory based) approach, Tötösy de Zepetnek argues that the study of culture and literature and their composite parts and aspects in the mode of comparative cultural studies enhances scholarship in the humanities against the current diminishing relevance of the field.

As a brief preamble, I would like to state that as I am discussing my topic in the context of the humanities and within the humanities I am dealing with the study of literature and culture, and as my targeted readership is North American (U.S./Canada), I hasten to point out that the currently discussed notion of constructivism in North American humanities has little to do with the notions of constructivism at hand. In the last few years, scholars mainly in departments of English began to discuss "constructivism." However, the "constructivism" discussed is some sort of extension of the Anglo-American school(s) of deconstruction, that is, the proposition that according to "constructivism" truth is is not based on any real or perceived "objective" observation or some such but that truth is always "constructed" by humans and as such it must be suspect. In the debate of how to do scholarship in the humanities, while there is nothing wrong with the suggestion that positivism and similar approaches are suspect or that deconstruction makes much "hidden" available to us, what I am concerned with is the lack of explicit a priori theoretical position and description and "observation" (as empirical as it can be), and following this, precise application of clearly stated premises resulting in descriptive analysis. This approach is resisted in the humanities today, most obviously in the study of literature and culture. In my opinion the single framework and methodology that corresponds to the stated tenets available to us today is the contextual (systemic and empirical) approach to literature and culture (for a bibliography, see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Bibliography" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss3/7>. As it stands, comparative cultural studies is developed from (radical) constructivism, from "Empirische Literaturwissenschaft" (Empirical Study of Literature: a framework that is a collateral to [radical] constructivism; see, e.g, Schmidt; Barsch, Rusch, Viehoff; Rusch; Viehoff; Tötösy de Zepetnek), the polysystem theory (see Even-Zohar), *bibliologie* (see Estivals, Meyriat, Richaudeau), and the work of Bourdieu. I should add that comparative cultural studies includes work in interdisciplinarity (for an outline of interdisciplinary work in the humanities, see Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature* 79-82). Thus it is relevant to

present selected tenets of (radical) constructivism as the background of comparative cultural studies (further on comparative cultural studies, see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "From Comparative Literature," "The New Humanities").

There are several schools of thought in constructivism (see Riegler <http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism>) and brief definitions of selected variants are introduced here as far as their applicability and practice is concerned with regard to the study of culture and literature for the proposed framework of comparative cultural studies. Thus, a more detailed differentiation between constructivism and its variants and the surrounding critical debate about constructivism and within it among its variants will not be discussed here: much of this debate can be read in such volumes as *Konstruktivismus. Geschichte und Anwendung* (Rusch and Schmidt) or in *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft in der Diskussion* (Barsch, Rusch, and Viehoff; see also Groeben and Schreier). Briefly, the origins of the mainly although not exclusively German-language schools of thought of constructivism can be found in the work of Vico, Berkeley, and most importantly of Piaget (see Glasersfeld), but also, via Hugo Dingler, of Kant (see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "The Empirical Science of Literature"). Ernst von Glasersfeld, one of the main proponents of constructivism bases his ideas on Piaget's developmental psychology and on Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's biological self-referential systems theory. Glasersfeld suggests that constructivism means a certain manner in which to reflect on knowledge as an act and action and its consequences, that is, constructivism means that individuals construct reality through cognitive subjectivity in self-referential autonomy and in empirically-conditioned processes ("Konstruktion de Wirklichkeit" 20). However, it is important to recognize that this constructing must be attached to the responsibility for the way and manner the world is understood and viewed (Glasersfeld, "Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit" 32). Siegfried J. Schmidt suggests that "the essence of a constructivist epistemology is expressed in the distinction between 'reality' and 'actuality' … 'Actuality' designates the phenomenal world of our experiences, a world constructed by our real brain; this brain is cognitively inaccessible … this construction happens in a 'reality' that is independent of our actuality" ("The Logic of Observation" 303). Further, Schmidt suggests that independent realities can be hypothesized but only if following "the requirements of reasonable argumentation in the social world of science" ("The Logic of Observation" 303). These postulates provide the bases for a framework for the contextual (systemic and empirical) study of literature and culture and in the following I outline the interaction from the epistemological base to the theoretical and methodological framework for the study of literature and culture in comparative cultural studies.

Constructivism is not to be understood in its everyday meaning as an activity of consciously and deliberately "constructing." Rather, and here is one of the premises of operationality, constructivists describe situations as empirically-conditioned processes where "reality" does not exist arbitrarily and without involvement with its constituents but according to specific biological, cognitive, and socio-cultural conditions the individual(s) in their socialized and natural environment are subjected to (see Schmidt, *Kognitive Autonomie* 125; "What Can 'Empirical' Mean in a Constructivist Context?," "The Empirical Study of Literature"). A further level of the constructivist epistemological base of the contextual (systemic and empirical) approach to culture and literature concerns the highly contentious issue of the empirical, particularly so in Anglo-American thought with its history of positivism and pragmatism (see, e.g., Diggins). Schmidt suggests, based on radical constructivist tenets postulated by Glasersfeld, Foerster, and others that "the alleged objectivity of experimental scientific research does not, as Constructivists say, result from a true copy of reality, but from methodologically controlled trivialization. In other words, in empirical research data are constructed under conditions with reduced complexity, and these data are then rendered significant in the framework of theories and models" ("The Logic of Observation" 304). In other words, empirical knowledge is operational and functional knowledge about correlation and coherence based on our cognitive nature and capacities. Spatial, temporal, and logical correlations between objects and occurrences do not exists per se but follow the logic of observation (see, for example, Kramaschki 232-33). The constructivist concept in the empirical means "explicitly observing observations, in other words, observing the construction of data and their interpretation in explicitly spelled-out theories" (Schmidt, "The Logic of Observation" 309). This postulate determines that in culture and literary studies "since meaning is no longer considered to be contained in the text itself, but as constructed cognitively and communicatively in the

processing of textual materials, interpretation is recognized as an essayistic activity as opposed to a scientific procedure" (Schmidt, "The Logic of Observation" 309). Hence the systemic and empirical tenets of the framework and methodology, all of which, I argue, are existing rarely in literary research, generally speaking.

The continuum from (radical) constructivism to the systemic and empirical approach to literature is based primarily on the dichotomy of actuality and reality, the postulates of observation (e.g., the empirical) and rational argumentation, and on the notion(s) of system. All three areas include epistemological as well as methodological perspectives and all three are strenously objected to by many scholars of both literature and philosophy on both sides of the Atlantic. I take the liberty to present the example of my own work, that is, a few examples of the critical reaction to my book, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*. The book -- as the proposed framework here -- finds itself between the two extreme poles of power and established thinking in the humanities and thus it succeeds to receive the objection of both camps, the traditionalists, proponents of focus on single-language/national literature, the postmodernists, deconstructionists, etc. (for lack of better terms to describe the dividing lines in the humanities today). Here are the examples: Theodore Ziolkowski of Princeton writes in his review of the book in *World Literature Today*: "When Tötösy goes on, however, to recommend 'the systemic and empirical approach to literature and culture' (based mainly on the work of Luhmann and Schmidt) as the framework and methodology for the field, he will probably lose many of his readers" and closes his review with the statement that "Tötösy begins by lamenting the current crisis in the humanities and the marginalization of literary study. I do not believe *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, for all the author's earnestness, will contribute to the solution" (606). Here I must ask why it should be that scholars would not be able to read and digest a framework and methodology not as of yet in the "general" repertoire of literary scholarship? And the blanket negation of the framework is a clear sign of a traditionalist's objection to a new notion, at least the way I read Ziolkowski's review of the book. And then on one other end of the spectrum is a review by Frans-Willem Korsten, a scholar who approves of the "empirical" and the "systemic" approach but in my book, he writes, "there is no substantial example of the proposed empirical evidence or of empirical kinds of literary research that support Zepetnek's [sic] analyses or contentions. It's a good book, mind you. It contains much that I endorse. But, there is is nothing 'empirical' in it" (39). Clearly, what is difficult here is, on the one hand, to persuade traditionalists in literary studies that the contextual or culture approach would at least be a valuable parallel approach while on the other hand, to persuade hardcore cognivitists that to do the empirical and systemic in literary studies is possible but only so far (I must add that, on the other hand, the book received a good number of enthusiastic reviews).

As far as I am concerned, the criticism of the constructivist being an idealist who advocates arbitrary constructions of reality can be countered on several points. First, there is the postulate of viability. This is a postulate suggesting that humans genetically predisposed and by experience "know" what is real (Schmidt, "The Logic of Observation" 303). Second, humans interact and communicate by similar means of sensory perception, in essence to construct consensus by mechanisms of controlled trivialization. In other words, we use our sensory and communicative capacities in order to arrive at the consensual description of a table in the room we sit in. Obviously, this process becomes more complicated as simple sensory perceptions become insufficient to deal with higher orders of communication such as discourse, conflict, history, fictionality, etc. Discourse, conflict, history, etc., in one word culture, including language as an instrument of coordinating behaviour and writing as a subsystem of the system of social interaction, may be defined as a "program to thematize on all levels of communication the fundamental dichotomies which lay the basis of a society's 'world model'" (Schmidt, "The Logic of Observation" 305). The epistemological foundations of constructivism in the context of Schmidt's definition can be found in the works of scholars in a variety of fields. For instance, the work of such scientists as Ervin Laszlo or Michael Bushev suggest a strong analogy of their thinking with that of contstructivists. Laszlo, in his volume, *The Interconnected Universe: Conceptual Foundations of Transdisciplinary Unified Theory*, argues for an interconnectionist and systemic world view and Bushev, in his *Synergetics: Chaos, Order, Self-Organization*, defines the notion of system as "a methodology of the scientific knowledge and of the social practice, which is based upon the study of objects as systems. In the methodology of the syste[mat]ic approach the

parts are studied on the basis of the whole. The system[at]ic approach defines a new cognitive paradigm, which differs in principle from the classical one, aimed at cognizing the whole through its constituents" (19; although Bushev uses "systematic" instead of "systemic," the latter is more appropriate). In the case of art and literature, this approach has profound implications: "I think there are the strongest grounds for placing entropy alongside beauty and melody … Entropy is only found when the parts are viewed in association, and it is by viewing or hearing the parts in association that beauty and melody are discerned" (Bushev 125; Bushev uses the notion of entropy in the context of Bertalanffy's general systems theory developed from thermodynamics, the basis of systems theory and that has been adopted in literary and culture studies including Schmidt). And Thomas Shannon, in his *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective* argues for the systemic approach in a global humanistic context, including its application in cultural analysis (204-07). Immanuel Wallerstein's work on systems and systems theory, too, is to be mentioned here because it appears to make some inroads in the humanities in the last few years, at this point in postcolonial studies and globalization studies.

For a further component of operational constructivism, I extend the notion of responsibility to the pragmatism and ethics of social discourse (this is different from Luhmann's somewhat similar concept of operational constructivism especially in the comparative context). The important element of my postulate lies in the interconnection of (neo)pragmatism (i.e., operationalism and functionalism) and ethics, two notions usually (and wrongly) perceived in opposition to each other. As I suggest in some of my previous publications, in the last two decades also Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory influenced the debate of and about constructivists as well as the study of literature (see, for example, Gehrke; articles in response to Gehrke's arguments are available in the *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* with articles by scholars associated with the University of Siegen Institute for Empirical Literature and Media Research). In the corpus of constructivism it is acknowledged that affinities exists between it and pragmatism (see, e.g., Kramaschki 225) but not positivism. However, I would suggest that the operational and functional perspective of constructivism and even more so of the systemic and empirical approach to culture and literature comes about from a different base. As Pasternack correctly surmizes, "the methodological postulates with those of epistemological and ontological ones are built on correlations which cannot simply explained by pragmatic definitions" (63). Rather, the difference is to be found in the parameters of constructivism as explained by Schmidt in the dichotomy of "reality" and "actuality." In other words, the aspect of operationalism and functionalism of constructivism is based in the understanding of self-referential systems theory and the resulting methodological postulates applied in the systemic and empirical approach to culture and literature.

In addition to the suggested parameters of constructivism, one in my opinion crucial aspect should be mentioned: this is the ethical dimension of constructivism. Here, Niklas Luhmann's works are influential (see Kramaschki 259-60). The tenets of constructivism include the postulate of social responsibility in that it negates the scientist's indifference towards results of research (Kramaschki 260). But this responsibility is not a simple response to moralistic demands in a traditional sense. Science and in general cognitive areas of human interaction are rational, when they operate without wrongly applied operational coherence (see Maturana qtd. in Kramaschki 266). This implies that responsibility and ethics are irrelevant and Humberto Maturana's proposition that science as a cognitive area of activity is absolved of validation (wertfrei) is an area of further investigation. This is the more important as in the systemic and empirical approach the perspective of social responsibility and the relevance of the study of literature and culture is a built-in factor (see Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature*, "The New Humanities"; nota bene: I am referring to the study of literature and culture and not to literature and culture: the social relevance of literature and culture per se is assumed beforehand while the study of literature and culture is not assumed, generally, as socially relevant). As far as constructivism is concerned, its ethical dimension is self evident: "from a Constructivist point of view it is exactly that holistic understanding offered that "in the context of Pieper pluralism is considered, from a pistemologico-anthropological point of view, not only as more applicable but also as ethical pluralism as the object of individual and social reality constructs" (Kramaschki 271; see also Foerster).

Constructivism and its varieties are, arguably, influencing not only the current philosophical scene

in Germany and Austria (and to some extent in the US) but they are an important factor, I postulate, in the development of an increasingly influential theoretical framework and methodology for the study of literature and culture. It is an important area to investigate because it connects and draws on a number of disciplines and fields traditionally not in touch with each other. For example, systems theories, neuroscience and neurophenomenology, autopoiesis (theory of living organization), cognitive science, and aspects of literature and culture linked together are areas of investigation which appear to be exciting avenues for a development in literary and cultural studies. At the same time, constructivism is not a homogeneous epistemological framework. On the current landscape of philosophy there are several varieties of constructivism. For an introduction, perhaps the most important point of departure may be to clarify taxonomical points. In the case of constructivism this is obviously an important task, particularly because of the use and history of the term with reference to Russian constructivism in art: It is my experience that often scholars in departments of English when "constructivism" is mentioned, the immediate reference is to "Russian constructivism" (see, for example, Harkins 237), thus indicating a misunderstanding, clearly. 9. In addition to Radical Constructivism which is perhaps the best known variety of the notion, there are several variants of constructivism including social constructivism (e.g., Berger; Luckmann), cognitive constructivism (e.g., Segers); empirical constructivism (e.g., Schmidt); the "Erlangen" constructivism; and the various constructivisms in art history (e.g., Harkins; Zitterbarth) and mathematics (e.g., Knorr-Cetina; Schmidt). In addition to these already established kinds of constructivism, I would like to add my own notion of a constructivist framework and methodology, one which I define as operational constructivism. For operational constructivism I take Peter Hejl's notion of culture: culture is neither autonomous nor is it variedly linked to other domains of human activity and thought but that it may be analysed by a model of layered bases, a composite: the biological (cognitive, neuroscientific, etc.) understood as a broader concept including social and cultural layers. This constructivist understanding of communicative action as culture allows for the study and analysis of the literary text, as well as other "texts" of culture, in the case of literature an interwoven process of literary and extra-literary factors and thus the notion of the literary system. However, while in this definition the notion of "operational" refers to the large and system-dependent composite of communicative action as culture, I am extending the notion of operationalism also to the notion of the how of the study literature and culture; for this approach, see my proposal of a comparative cultural studies below.

Here are selected definitions of constructivism as a school of thought in general and radical constructivism as a subschool relevant to the constructivism that forms the background for a comparative cultural studies:

"The metatheory known as constructivism, which has been developing over the years, has become particularly influential in the latter half of the twentieth century. What distinguishes constructivists from people with other orientations is an emphasis on the generative, organizational, and selective nature of human perception, understanding, and memory -- the theoretical 'building' metaphor guiding thought and inquiries. Constructivists view people as constructive agents and view the phenomenon of interest (meaning or knowledge) as built instead of passively 'received' by people whose ways of knowing, seeing, understanding, and valuing influence what is known, seen, understood, and valued. Attention goes to how these ways are acquired and manifested. Constructivism takes different forms, which include cognitive-developmental constructivism or constructionism, personal construct theory, radical constructivism, social constructivism and collaborative constructivism. These forms cut across various areas of inquiry: psychological studies (social psychology, cognitive psychology, clinical psychology, and developmental psychology), history, educational studies, rhetorical and literary studies, and socio-cultural studies in anthropology and sociology" (Spivey 34).

"Constructivism relinquishes the postulate that knowledge must be 'true' in the depiction of objective reality. Instead, Constructivism suggests that knowledge is a viability as far as it responds to the individual's world of experience" (Glasersfeld, "Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit" 30).

"Cognitive constructivism" is an alternate term containing the implication that proponents of constructivism and radical constructivism benefit(ted) from knowledge gained in cognitive science. To signal this added perspective, Rien T. Segers suggests the alternative designation "cognitive constructivism." The added perspective of cognitive science and neuroscience (neuro-epistemology,

neuro-philosophy) is important, in particular, in areas of study concerning the processes of reading (see, e.g., Miall).

"Radical constructivism ... is an unconventional approach to the problem of knowledge and knowing. It starts from the assumption that knowledge, no matter how it is defined, is in the hands of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience. What we make of experience constitutes the only world we consciously live in. It can be sorted into many kinds, such as things, self, others, and so on. But all kinds of experience are essentially subjective, and though I may find reasons to believe that my experience may not be unlike yours, I have no way of knowing that it is the same. The experience and interpretation of language are no exception" (Glasersfeld, *Radical Constructivism* 141).

"Operational constructivism" may be considered as variant of cognitive constructivism. One of its main components is the ethical dimension by attention to the real possibilities of the individual within his/her social and physical environment. Operational constructivism is a program of how to study literature and culture based on epistemological, systemic, and empirical tenets as postulated in the systemic and empirical approach to literature. Culture and literature, considered as a subsystem of culture occurs and functions in a soft, semi-permeable, and self-referential system of human and social interaction characterized by (cognitive) aesthetic and polyvalence conventions. Operational constructivism as an epistemological foundation and as a program for the study of culture and literature prescribes that research and study of culture and literature should be performed in an operational and functional mode.

It is the last definition and that I use as the background of my understanding and use of constructivism, in itself a background in and for the study of literature and culture defined as a contextual (systemic and empirical) approach and employed for the framework of comparative cultural studies. Next, I discuss briefly a further composite factor of my approach for the study of literature and culture as based in constructivism, namely the empirical study of literature (*Empirische Literaturwissenschaft*) and systemic approaches, both of which I extend to the study of culture, hence comparative cultural studies. The origins of the systemic approach can be traced to structuralism, the sociology of literature, and Russian Formalism. Structuralism in particular has influenced via de Saussure and the Russian Formalists a variety of disciplines such as philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and sociology with proponents such as Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Lyotard, Foucault, Goldmann, Bourdieu, Barthes, etc. The specific relationship between structuralism and the systemic approaches in general is often not clear. However, structuralism via the Russian Formalists and the Prague School has been a confessed departure for the polysystem theory (see, e.g., Even-Zohar). In the development of similar systemic theoretical frameworks such as the *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft* (Schmidt; for a history of the school see Viehoff), the *l'institution littéraire* (Jacques Dubois), the *champ littéraire* concept of Bourdieu, and Robert Estivals's school of *bibliologie* this is more indirect, and other disciplines such as the sociology of literature and theories of communication and media studies predominate as conceptual sources. As I discuss above, in philosophy (constructivism and radical constructivism) too, there is increasing discussion about the notion of system (see, e.g., Krohn). Generally speaking, systemic and institutional theories of literature, although borrowing from a range of disciplines such as mathematics, biology, and physics, and other theoretical frameworks and methodologies in the humanities and social sciences, as well as other frameworks for the study of literature, emanate mainly from sociology (in particular Niklas Luhmann and Talcott Parsons), the sociology of literature, and theories of communication (see, for example, Corner and Hawthorne). In this context, it should be noted that the systemic approach to literature, in general, refers to a micro structure although it could also be understood in the context of literature and culture as a macro structure.

Based on the above briefly outlined background of constructivism and the tenets of a contextual (systemic and empirical) approach to literature and culture, I propose a basic framework designated as "comparative cultural studies" in the form of ten principles as follows. The ten principles below represent the basic tenets and ideas of the framework and they are intended to be developed into a full-fledged framework with examples of application. For now, the principles represent a basis for discussion and a clear statement without lengthy descriptive argumentation. The principles of a comparative cultural studies presented here are innovative precisely because curiously enough, the

notion of cultural studies in most cases lacks a comparative, that is, international and pluralistic range and depth. While it is obvious that the framework of comparative cultural studies could be presented and applied without tenets of constructivism, it is essential that the argumentation of the base of the framework be stated. In other words, comparative cultural studies is a framework that is put together by borrowings from a variety of approaches, sources, methods, etc.: it is a composite approach. At the same time, many if not all of the proposed principles rest on constructivist thought.

The first 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 principle 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 another. This means -- among other things as listed below -- 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 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, border, and peripheral and it encompasses both form and substance. However, attention must be paid of the "how" of any inclusionary approach, attestation, methodology, and ideology so as not to repeat the mistakes of Eurocentrism and "universalization" from a "superior" Eurocentric point of view. Dialogue is the only solution.

The third 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 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-focused, 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 inter-mechanisms of intellectual recognition and institutional power.

The fifth 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-language speaker who is, in particular, in need of other languages.

The sixth 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 seventh 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 team work with participants from several disciplines). In the latter case, an obstacle is the general reluctance of humanities scholars to employ team work 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.

The eighth 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. For a change toward 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 an inter- and supra-national humanities.

The ninth 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 tenth 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. In sum, a definition of comparative cultural studies is as follows: comparative cultural studies is field of study where selected tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with selected tenets of the field of cultural studies meaning that the study of culture and culture products -- including but not restricted to literature, communication, media, art, etc. -- is performed in a contextual and relational construction and with a plurality of methods and approaches, inter-disciplinarity, and, if and when required, including team work. In

comparative cultural studies it is the processes of communicative action(s) in culture and the how of these processes that constitute the main objectives of research and study. However, comparative cultural studies does not exclude textual analysis proper or other established fields of study. In comparative cultural studies, ideally, the framework of and methodologies available in the systemic and empirical study of culture are favoured.

Note: The above paper is a revised version of Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Comparative Cultural Studies and Constructivism." *Frame: Tijdschrift voor Literatuurwetenschap* 15.1 (2001): 38-60.

Works Cited

Barsch, Achim, Gebhard Rusch, and Reinhold Viehoff, eds. *Siegfried J. Schmidt Festschrift*. Halle: U of Halle-Wittenberg (1999-): <http://www.schmidt.uni-halle.de/>.
Barsch, Achim, Gebhard Rusch, and Reinhold Viehoff, eds. *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft in der Diskussion*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994.
Berger, Johannes. "Autopoiesis: Wie 'systemisch' ist die Theorie sozialer Systeme?" *Sinn, Kommunikation und soziale Differenzierung. Beiträge zu Luhmanns Theorie sozialer Systeme*. Ed. H. Haferkamp and M. Schmid. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987. 129-52.
Bertalanffy, Ludwig von. *General Systems Theory*. New York: George Braziller, 1968.
Bushev, Michael. *Synergetics: Chaos, Order, Self-Organization*. New Jersey: World Scientific, 1994.
Corner, John, and Jeremy Hawthorn, eds. *Communication Studies: An Introductory Reader*. London: Edward Arnold, 1993.
Diggins, John P. *The Promise of Pragmatism*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1991.
Dubois, Jacques. *L'Institution de la littérature. Introduction à une sociologie*. Bruxelles: Labor, 1978.
Dubois, Jacques. "Analyse de l'institution littéraire. Quelques points de repère." *Pratiques* 32 (1981): 122-30.
Estivals, Robert, Jean Meyriat, and François Richaudeau, eds. *Les Sciences de lécrit. Encyclopédie international de bibliologie*. Paris: Retz, 1993.
Even-Zohar, Itamar. *Polysystem Studies*. Special Issue of *Poetics Today* 11.1 (1990): 12-68.
Foerster, Heinz von. *Wissen und Gewissen. Versuch einer Brücke*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993.
Gehrke, Ralph. "Was leistet der Radikale Konstruktivismus für die Literaturwissenschaft?" *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68.1 (1994): 170-88.
Glasersfeld, Ernst von. *Wissen, Sprache und Wirklichkeit. Arbeiten zum Radikalen Konstruktivismus*. Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1987.
Glasersfeld, Ernst von. "Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit und des Begriffs der Objektivität." *Einführung in den Konstruktivismus*. By Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Peter M. Hejl, Siegfried J. Schmidt, and Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1992. 9-39.
Glasersfeld, Ernst von. *Radical Constructivism: A Way of Knowing and Learning*. New York: Falmer, 1995.
Groeben, Norbert, and Margrit Schreier. "Does an Empirical Science of Literature Need Metatheoretical Discussion? Yes, but -- Some Answers." *Empirical Studies of Literature*. Ed. E. Ibsch, D. Schram, and G. Steen. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991. 371-79.
Harkins, W.E., and Gerald J. Janacek. "Constructivism." *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993. 237.
Hejl, Peter M. "Konstruktion der sozialen Konstruktion. Grundlinien einer konstruktivistischen Sozialtheorie." *Der Diskurs des Radikalen Konstruktivismus*. Ed. S.J. Schmidt. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987. 303-39.
Hejl, Peter M. "Culture as a Network of Socially Constructed Realities." *Cultural Participation: Trends since the Middle Ages*. Ed. Ann Rigney and Douwe Fokkema. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993. 227-50.
Knorr-Cetina, Karin. "Spielarten des Konstruktivismus. Einige Notizen und Anmerkungen." *Soziale Welt* 40.12 (1989): 86-96.
Knorr-Cetina, Karin. "Zur Unterkomplexität der Differenzierungstheorie. Empirische Anfragen an die Systemtheorie." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 21.6 (1992): 406-19.
Korsten, Frans-Willem. "SASOTRT(L)T: How the Empirical Study of Literature Started with the Wrong Name and How It Did Not Truly Substantiate What It Promised." *Frame: Tijdschrift voor Literatuurwetenschap* 14.23 (2000): 28-42.
Kramaschki, Lutz. "Konstruktivismus, konstruktivistische Ethik und Neopragmatismus." *Konstruktivismus und Ethik*. Ed. Gebhard Rusch and Siegfried J. Schmidt. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995. 224-68.
Krohn, Wolfgang, and Günter Krüppers, eds. *Emergenz. Die Entstehung von Ordnung, Organisation und Bedeutung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992.
Laszlo, Ervin. *The Interconnected Universe: Conceptual Foundations of Transdisciplinary Unified Theory*. New Jersey: World Scientific, 1995.
Luckmann, Thomas. "Kultur und Kommunikation." *Kultur und Gesellschaft*. Ed. M. Haller, H.J. Hoffmann-Nowotny, and W. Zapf. Frankfurt: Campus, 1989. 33-45.
Luhmann, Niklas. *Social Systems*. Trans. J. Bednarz, Jr. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.
Luhmann, N., H. Maturana, M. Namiki, V. Redder, and F. Varela. *Beobachter. Konvergenz der Erkenntnistheorien?* München: Fink, 1992.
Maturana, Humberto. *Erkennen. Die Organisation und Verkörperung von Wirklichkeit*. Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1985.
Miall, David S. "Anticipation and Feeling in Literary Response: A Neuropsychological Perspective." *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Literature, the Media and the Arts* 23.4 (1995): 275-98.
Pasternack, Gerhard. "Empirische Literaturwissenschaft und ihre wissenschaftsphilosophischen Voraussetzungen." *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft in der Diskussion*. Ed. Achim Barsch, Gebhard Rusch, and Reinhold Viehoff.

Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994. 55-81.
Riegler, Alex, ed. *Radical Constructivism* (1996-): <http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism>.
Rusch, Gebhard, and Siegfried J. Schmidt, eds. *Konstruktivismus: Geschichte und Anwendung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992.
Rusch, Gebhard, and Siegfried J. Schmidt, eds. *Konstruktivismus und Sozialtheorie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1993.
Rusch, Gebhard, and Siegfried J. Schmidt, eds. *Konstruktivismus und Ethik*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995.
Schmidt, Siegfried J. *Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literature: The Components of a Basic Theory*. Trans. Robert de Beaugrande. Hamburg: Buske, 1980.
Schmidt, Siegfried J. "The Logic of Observation: An Introduction to Constructivism." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 19.3 (1992): 295-312.
Schmidt, Siegfried J. "Vom Text zum Literatursystem. Skizze einer konstruktivistischen (empirischen) Literaturwissenschaft." *Einführung in den Konstruktivismus*. By Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Peter M. Hejl, Siegfried J. Schmidt, and Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1992. 147-66.
Schmidt, Siegfried J. *Kognitive Autonomie und soziale Orientierung. Konstruktivistische Bemerkungen zum Zusammenhang von Kognition, Kommunikation, Medien und Kultur*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994a.
Schmidt, Siegfried J. "What Can 'Empirical' Mean in a Constructivist Context? 10 Considerations." Empi*rical Approaches to Literature*. Ed. Gebhard Rusch. Siegen: Siegen U, Institute for Empirical Literature and Media Research, 1994b. 109-12.
Schmidt, Siegfried.J. "The Empirical Study of Literature: Reasons, Plans, Goals." *The Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture as Theory and Application*. Ed. Tötösy de Zepetnek and Irene Sywenky. Edmonton: Research Institute for Comparative Literature, U of Alberta, and Siegen: LUMIS, Siegen U, 1997. 137-53.
Segers, Rien T. "Dynamics and Progress in Literary Studies? Some Notes on a Neglected Topic in Literary Scholarship with Special Reference to Reception Research." *Celebrating Comparativism*. Ed. Katalin Kürtösi and József Pál. Szeged: József Attila U / Gold P, 1994. 167-205.
Shannon, Thomas R. *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
Spivey, Nancy Nelson. *The Constructivist Metaphor: Reading, Writing, and the Making of Meaning*. San Diego: Academic P, 1997.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "The Empirical Science of Literature / Constructivist Theory of Literature." *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Ed. I.R. Makaryk. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993. 36-39.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "Bibliography of Work in Contextual (Systemic and Empirical) Approaches in Comparative Cultural Studies." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 3.3 (2001): <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss3/7>.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 1.3 (1999): <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss3/2>.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies." *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2003. 235-67.
Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "The New Humanities: The Intercultural, the Comparative, and the Interdisciplinary." *Globalization and the Futures of Comparative Literature*. Ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski and Alfred J. López. Special Issue of *The Global South* 1.2 (2007): 45-68.
Viehoff, Reinhold, ed. *Alternative Traditionen. Dokumente zur Entwicklung einer Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft*. Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1991.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic P, 1974.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. "World-System Analysis: Theoretical and Interpretative Issues." *World-System Analysis: Theory and Methodology*. Ed. Terence K. Hopkins. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. "The Relevance of the Concept of Semiperiphery to Southern Europe." *Semiperipheral Development: The Politics of Southern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Giovanni Arrighi. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985. 31-39.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. *After Liberalism*. New York: The New P, 1995.
Ziolkowski, Theodore. Review of Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998). *World Literature Today* 73.3 (1999): 606.
Zitterbarth, Walter. "Der Erlanger Konstruktivismus in seiner Beziehung zum konstruktiven Realismus." *Formen des Konstruktivismus in der Diskussion*. Ed. M.F. Peschl. Wien: VUV, 1991. 73-87.

Author's profile: Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/totosycv> teaches media and communication studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. His areas of scholarship and publication are in comparative cultural studies incl. comparative media and communication studies, comparative literature, postcolonial and ethnic minority studies, film and literature, audience studies, English, French, German, Central European, US-American and Canadian cultures and literatures, history, pedagogy, interculturality, conflict mediation and resolution, bibliographies, new media and knowledge management, and editing.