Review of: *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe:*
Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries – Volume IV: Types and Stereotypes

Editors: Marcel Cornis-Pope (Virginia Commonwealth U) & John Neubauer (U of Amsterdam)
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REVIEW BY FAUSTO BEDOYA

This study on the History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe (*H.L.C.E.C.E.)* offers trans-cultural views of literary history including sections on poetry, figurations of family, female identity, the "other," outlaws, trauma, and mediation, as well as an Epilogue covering East-Central European Literature after 1989 and following the collapse of the Soviet Union. East-Central Europe has long been a cultural hot-spot, and there is a history of brilliance that arises from this region. Herta Müller, recent Nobel laureate in literature (2009) arises from tragic circumstances within cultural milieu. Twelve other Nobel literary prize winners have emerged from East Central Europe. And, Elie Wiesel who comes from this same region won the Nobel Peace Prize. Many of these writers and their colleagues endured intense suffering through war and political upheaval. One can think of the writing of Czeslaw Milosz, Isaac Bashevish Singer, Günter Grass, Impe Kertesz, or Elias Canetti. Such authors present a polyphony ov voices emerging from cities such as Vilnius, Auschwitz, Warsaw, Gdansk, Sighet, Nitzkydorf, Ruse, and Kracow. This edition is the last in a four-volume project that started some fifteen years ago in Toronto under the stewardship of Mario Valdés and Linda Hutcheon with the aim of re-thinking European literary history. This four volume project has successfully met that challenge by generating an alternate and collaborative form of critical discourse on literary developments, while conceptualizing regional histories within a transnational context.

H.L.C.E.C.E successfully responds to and embraces emergent theoretical and practical approaches to writing literary history by recognizing the multiple complexities of voice that arose in Twentieth Century literature. The dialogical and varied perspectives are recognized here, while skepticism concerning "master narratives" is addressed. As such, the heterogeneity of critical voices assembled here moves beyond conventional, linear literary histories thereby establishing this volume as a hallmark not only for studies in East Central European Literature, but as a model for global literary study. This collection considers a broad range of literary cultures and as such provides valuable insights on the production and consumption of literature as it arises from the hot-bed of strife known as East-Central Europe. By adopting multicultural and regional perspectives, this project provides thought clusters or "nodes" of focus that respond to elements such as key political events, literary periods and genres, cities and regions, literary institutions, and figures of literary form. In this way, movements in histories, genres, institutions and types of literature are covered in a manner that recognizes them as organic and evolving phenomena.

One of the remarkable aspects of this extensive study involves the fact that some sections are co-written by roughly a dozen internationally respected scholars. This is the case for the section on East-Central European Literature after 1989, which includes subsections on Literary and Cultural Reconstruction, Terminological Historical Reconsiderations, "Amended Texts": Literary Responses and Transformations after 1989, Post-communist and Postcolonial Motifs in Baltic Literatures of the 1990s, Theatre and Drama at the Turning Point, as well as, Narratives of Exodus, Contact, and Return. This section on East-Central European Literature in the post-Soviet period includes commentaries by esteemed scholars such as Marcel Cornis Pope with Boyko Pencev and Alexander Kiossev on Bulgarian literature, John Neubauer and Mihaly Szegedy-Maszák on Hungarian literature, Dagmar Roberts on Slovak Literature, Karl Jirgens on Latvian Literature, Arturas Tereskinas on Lithuanian Literature, Tamara Trojanowska on Polish Theater, Domnica Rădeluscu on Romanian Theater, Zoltán Impre on Hungarian Theatre, as well as Andaluna Borcilă and Marta Bladek on Narratives of Post-1989 returns. The combination of these manifold perspectives in a single section provides a useful and significant scope that is helpful to both experts and newcomers by providing a succinct and informative overview on cultural developments. This particular section of the project covers the final "nodal" points which include the collapse of the Iron Curtain, freedom from censorship, open contact with larger European and world audiences, freedom to travel, collapse of state subsidies, introduction of Capitalist commercialism, and the subsequent crises experienced by theaters, publishers, journals, and educational institutions while the region was re-stabilizing. Accompanying the political vacuum left by the former Soviet Union, came a re-surfacing of nationalistic, chauvinistic, and xenophobic attitudes. Many noted authors departed from the regions in question, including Norman Manea, Andrei Codrescu, Milan Kundera, and Josef Skvorecky. The period of strife was followed by a new sense of inter-culturalism which served to reshape attitudes and mores.

East-Central Europe has fallen victim to war, terror, and genocide, with millions seeking refuge from Nazi-ism or Communism, often finding misery, prison, exile, or death. Yet, the region has also produced stunning literary and cultural achievements. The editors of this volume, Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer have meticulously organized the collective comments and interactions of a broad cadré of international scholars thereby offering lucid and candid perspectives on key literary phenomena. Due to the consortium of international scholars contributing to these four volumes, we now have detailed insights into the extraordinary deprivations and remarkable achievements of this region.

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