

Tatakau Hikaku Bungaku.

Adrian Marino and the Militant Comparatism in Japan

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Abstract

The paper presents the Japanese translation of Adrian Marino's book *Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, the first book of Romanian literary criticism translated in Japan. At the same time the basic issues related to comparative literature in general and in particular in Japan are also presented. The new comparatist science elaborated by René Étiemble, proposed a new humanism without boundaries, oriented towards a unity of attitudes, preoccupations and ideas, which will certainly be predominant in the 21st century. The proposal of "universal literature" seems to be a great opening of horizons. This includes the literature of every nation from West and East, both the Oriental and the Occidental literature. This theory adopted by Marino too, suggested that only comparative literature could fully understand the complex relationship between the different cultures.

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Forsaking Eurocentrism, opening up to the Literature of the world, without value-appreciations dictated by a supreme hierarchic centre, the ideological implication of the comparatist research, its direct confrontation with the social and political, undoubtedly implies the opening towards universality. The new comparatist science proposed by René Étiemble, a research domain situated beyond the positions of the academic, positivistic and historical erudition, draws all the literature of the world, from East to West, to the attention of the branch study, each of them having the occasion to actively take part in the round table initiated by the "new type of comparatist".

A lucid mind of his age, an attentive spirit to the changes of his age, Adrian Marino reacted strongly to the change of the comparatist

research proposed by Étiemble, which reached a period of crisis, a fact noticed already in 1958 by René Wellek and reaffirmed in 1995.¹ Adrian Marino acknowledged the French scholar's merits resulting from the difference of horizons, of mentality and work style as compared to his branch colleagues and considered him the only one able to lay the foundations of a renewed, combative comparatism. Marino dedicated a volume, the first of its kind, to this specialist in comparative literature, and connoisseur of oriental languages. The work entitled *Etiemble ou le comparatisme militant* was published by the Gallimard Publishing House in Paris in 1982. It contained the Romanian scholar's opinion about the afore mentioned issue: "La différence d'esprit, d'horizon, de mentalité et de style de travail entre Étiemble et le reste du comparatisme, ou – plus exactement – la plupart de ses collègues est donc considérable. Il importe de le préciser d'entrée: d'une part pour marquer l'apport original de cet esprit non conformiste; de l'autre, pour nous expliquer certaines positions en cul-de-sac du comparatisme actuel. Étiemble donne à ses cours et à ses interventions un tour très souvent polémique; il n'hésite pas à prendre parti sur les problèmes politiques et idéologiques les plus brûlants; il veut infléchir le comparatisme vers des prises de position concernant les nouveaux rapports idéologiques et autres (Ouest-Est, Tiers Monde, États-Unis, Union Soviétique, Chine, etc.); bref, il rêve d'un comparatisme mis à jour, complètement rajeuni, combatif. Son militantisme idéologique, culturel, littéraire est donc fondamental; le comparatisme lui-même n'est que l'une des applications possibles."² The book on the militant comparatism of Étiemble, written by a Romanian author has not only been received well by the public but also by the branch publications in France and outside France. It was reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*,³ *Gazetta de Lausanne*,⁴ *La Libre Belgique*,⁵ *Rivista di Letterature moderne e comparative*,⁶ *World Literature Today*⁷ and then translated into other languages.¹

¹ See Charles Bernheimer, Introduction. The Anxieties of Comparison, in: Charles Bernheimer (ed.), *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 2–17.

² Adrian Marino, *Etiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982, pp. 12–13.

³ Issue 10 December 1982.

⁴ Issue 7 August 1982.

⁵ Issue 3 August 1982.

⁶ Issue 2/1984.

⁷ Issue 1983.

Adrian Marino's book defending energetically the principle of "world literature", of the East-West and Occident-Orient literary relations, of the free literary communications, of the equality between literatures, was published by the Keisō Shobō Publishing House in Tokyo in October 1988, under the title *Tatakau Hikaku Bungaku (Militant Comparatism)*. It was translated by Hiroshi Watanabe and Nobuhiro Satō, the former being specialist in French literature and translator of several works such as *Comparative Literature* by H. Frenzt and N. P. Stallknecht, *What is Comparative Literature* by P. Brunel, C. Pichois and A. M. Rousseau, *Faith and Literature* by Philip Tratford, the latter specialist in Japanese literature.

The volume of the Romanian author was introduced to the Japanese, as a work penetrated by the universalist perspective introduced to the study of comparative literature at that time by Étiemble, the creator of the "Connaissance de l'Orient" collection, founded in 1956, under the auspices of UNESCO and Gallimard, where several Arab, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Persian, Vietnamese etc. masterpieces had been published. René Étiemble, nicknamed "the terrible child of French comparatism", already proposed the repudiation of the historic perspective in comparativist analyses in *Comparaison n'est pas raison* (1957), translated in Japanese by A. Shiga, under the title *Hikaku Bungaku no Kiken - Hikaku wa Rinarazu*.² The French scholar considered both conservatism and nationalism noxious factors in the study of the cultural-literary phenomenon, and that only the liberation from the constraints of a rigid system of interpretation can facilitate the creation of a comparativist type that would militate for a new humanism. The Japanese translators recognized in the *Postscript* to the Japanese version Adrian Marino's sympathy for the "militant comparatism of Étiemble", but observed at the same time "the original ideas of the author as a theoretician and a literary critic"³. On the other hand, the two Japanese translators expressed their gratitude to Adrian Marino in the name of science for the debate proposed by the book also in their

¹ See Adrian Marino, *Corespondență* (Correspondence). in: Manuscripts - Adrian Marino Collection 416, "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library, Cluj-Napoca.

² "Hikaku Bunka Kenkyū, Tokyo Daigaku Kyōyōgakubu Kiyō" (The Bulletin of Comparative Literature of Tokyo University), IV, 1963.

³ Adrian Marino, *Tatakau Hikaku Bungaku*, Translated in Japanese by Hiroshi Watanabe and Nobuhiro Satō, Tokyo, Keisō Shobō Publishing House, 1988, p. 212.

personal correspondence with the Romanian author. They mentioned that this research widens the theoretical horizon of understanding and interpretation of the one interested in the issues of compared literature, completing its speciality bibliography. Nobuhiro Satô directly thanked the Romanian comparatist: „Cette excellente oeuvre-ci nous a éclairé sur l'état présent du comparatisme et ses problèmes. Je vous remercie des bienfaits de la science.”¹ Professor Hiroshi Watanabe expressed his wish to read the last edition of the Romanian specialist's volume, *Comparatisme et théorie de la littérature* (1988, P.U.F., Paris). He acknowledged that, though his students found the text “quite difficult”, he read the Japanese translation together with them,² trying to understand the depths of the new type of comparatism.

The Japanese publication of Adrian Marino's book, *Etiemble ou le comparatisme militant* has also its anecdotic part. The translation was made without first informing the author, who learned about the apparition of the book through Isamu Taniguchi, Professor of the “St. Andrew” University in Osaka, literary theoretician, aesthetician and semiotician, the Romanian critic had corresponded with for over a decade. Having participated at the Summer Courses organized by the Bucharest University in 1974, Isamu Taniguchi was familiar with the Romanian works of literary criticism. He read Iordan, Ivănescu, Coșeriu and Marino. He was so impressed by the latter's work, *Dicționarului de idei literare* (Dictionary of the Literary Ideas),³ that he contacted its author, asking his permission to translate the *Critica ideii de literatură* (The Critique of the Idea of Literature) in Japanese. However, the project was not finished after all, despite the fact that some of Marino's letters allude to the fact that in 1979 there was even an agreement in this sense between the Dacia and the Jiritsu-Shobo Publishing Houses. Thus Adrian Marino was announced “to his amazement” by Isamu Taniguchi about the appearance of a Japanese translation of the book published by Gallimard. Marino in his turn informed Étiemble who informed Gallimard about the illicit edition of the book. On 1 December 1988 Adrian Marino received a message from the Parisian publishing house's employee responsible for the copyright problems related to foreign authors' works that they had received no requests from Japan for the translation of the book. An

¹ Idem, Corespondență, in: *Manuscripts* – Adrian Marino Collection 419: 40, “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library, Cluj-Napoca.

² Adrian Marino Collection 419: 56.

³ Adrian Marino, *Dicționarului de idei literare*, Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing House, 1973.

investigation was launched, and finally the error is discovered – surprisingly fast. The Tuttle Mori Agency from Tokyo confused two volumes by the Romanian author: *Etiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, published by Gallimard, and *Comparatisme et théorie de la littérature*, published by Presses Universitaires de France. And as the Japanese usually do not quote the complete title, it had taken a while for those at the P.U.F. to realize, that actually it was about the book published by Gallimard.¹

The volume signed by Adrian Marino, *Etiemble ou le comparatisme militant* was appreciated by the two Japanese translators as an “energetic work, discussing the true way of existence of Modern Comparative Literature, based on Etiemble *Theory of Literature* which was founded on a worldwide point of view.”² The translation had additionally, compared with the original, an index, and a last page which introduced the translators, the publishing house and contains the copyright indications etc.

The Japanese version of the book in question was signalled in the *Tosho Shinbun* (Book Review)³ and in *Hikaku Bungaku* (Comparative Literature Review),⁴ being welcomed by the reviewers.⁵ One of this chronicles, entitled *The Rejection of Eurocentrism. An Actual and Substantial Literature* (*Yôroppachûshinshugi o kyojetsu. Konnichiteki katsu gutaiteki de ikita hikaku bungaku ga*), signed by Eiko Imabashi, insistently remarked the new path proposed by Étiemble in the study of comparative literature, a research perspective that had already gained followers among such as the Romanian comparatist. According to the study, the valorization of all cultures, de-metropolization, the equivalence of values according to a universal system of values shall regenerate the comparativist studies, having beneficial influences upon the researches of this kind in Europe and Japan.

The issue of *România literară* (Literary Romania) published on 14 December 1989, commented on the Japanese reviews and even republished a fragment from them, namely the one that attempted to understand why a Romanian comparatist opted for this kind of approach to comparative literature: “We also believe that the opinions promoted in

¹ See Adrian Marino Collection 419: 2–11.

² English translation by Isamu Taniguchi, in the Adrian Marino Collection 419: 45.

³ Issue 619/3, XII, 1988.

⁴ Issue 28 November 1988.

⁵ See Adrian Marino Collection 419: 48.

this book by Mr. Marino originated from the particular historical conditions which resulted in the exclusion of the East-European area (to which he belonged) from the Western system, in spite of its European conscience." Adrian Marino explicitly acknowledged the truth of this statement after a few years, at the 13th Congress of the "International Association of Comparative Literature" (1991), organized in Tokyo, where he even presented a communication in this sense: "*European*" and "*World*" Literature: A New Comparative View, *Proceedings...* The study of comparative literature as an "academic discipline" did not respond to the requirements of the age. From the perspective of a "new comparativist spirit, other objectives are imposed, other aims are to be followed in this domain of research, which can so smoothly cross the frontiers between nations. Comparative literature can no longer remain neuter towards the ideological, or indifferent towards the political and the social. The research proposed by this science needs to transform from a positivist one, from a simple analyser of facts as "sources" of influence, the circulation of literary themes, etc. into an implicated, militant one that serves the East-West relations through a board of disciplines with interest for *anti-nationalism, anti-Eurocentrism, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, universalism, cooperation, free communication*. All these are undoubtedly pleading for a new humanism and a new positivism: "Here are, then, a number of themes that overtly or covertly contest the official communist ideology. We have mentioned this episode only as an illustrative instance of the new comparativist spirit that has been taking shape in the East – in our case in Romania – under totalitarian conditions. In the space where we lived, or, better said, survived."¹

"It is the first book of Romanian literary criticism that was translated in Japan, an absolute premiere in every sense", confessed Marino about *Etiembe ou le comparatisme militant* in a letter addressed to the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy of Japan in Bucharest,² adding that until 1989, he had been the only comparatist from the East European countries, who was translated in Japanese. Naturally this caused a great stir in Romania too. In the *România literară*³ an article appeared with the title *O carte românească de literatură comparată în Japonia* (A

¹ Adrian Marino, "European" and "World Literature": A New Comparative View, in: *Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, Tokyo, ICLA'91, 1991, p. 301.

² Adrian Marino Collection 419: 2.

³ Issue XXII, 10, 9 March 1989.

Romanian Book on Comparative Literature in Japan), signed by Iulia Mugescu. The *Curentul* (The Current)¹ also consigned the event through the article *Critic român tradus în Japonia* (Romanian Critic Translated in Japan), where the recent publication of Adrian Marino's work abroad was considered as being "indeed spectacular". In the *Lucafărul*,² A. Silvestri noticed in the article *Proiecte ale unui "nou comparatism"* (Projects of a "New Comparatism") the entrance of Romanian thoughts into the world circuit: "The Romanian point of view in the universal dialogue of ideas is more and more interesting." The *Utunk* (Our Way)³ published the material *Marino – Japánul* (Marino in Japanese). Neither did the review *Convorbiri literare* (Literary Conversations) overlook this moment, it published Viorel Căcoveanu's article *Succese ale criticii literare românești* (Successes of Romanian Literary Criticism). This author discussed again the issue in the *Steaua* magazine⁴ under the title *Tradus în Japonia* (Translated in Japan) where he noted: "A Romanian author living in Cluj-Napoca, published in Paris and translated in Tokyo... Concealing, or more exactly controlling his emotions, Adrian Marino confesses that 'it has been a total surprise!'"

The background of the volume's Japanese translation was one that was opened at the end 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century by Tsubouchi Shoyo, Shakespeare's translator in the Meiji period (1868-1912). In conformity with the spirit of the age of "modernization" which was in quest of the "European model"⁵, Professor Tsubouchi used Macaulay Posnett's book, *Comparative Literature* published in 1886 as a bibliographic source for his course of comparative literature held at the Waseda University, Tokyo. However, years passed until the period when – after the World War II – Japan emerged completely from its cultural isolation, which characterized her during the period of the war, and adopted an "open" attitude towards the world. In 1948 The Japan Comparative Literature Association (JCLA) was founded, and from then on, the researches sought to find Western influences in Japanese literature, a highly contrastive attitude with that from the time of the war,

¹ Issue LX, 5996, March–April 1989.

² Issue XXXII, 40, 7 October 1989.

³ Issue 6/1989.

⁴ Issue XL, 3/1989.

⁵ Cf. Yoshihiro Ohsawa, *Beyond Centrism and Regionalism: Comparative Literature in Japan*, in: *Comparative Literature Worldwide: Issues and Methods*, Vol. II, Montevideo, ICLA, 2000, p. 37.

when the distinguishing features of the Japanese culture were only emphasized.¹ The time had come for revising the theoretical problems raised by this discipline, for "expanding" the concept of the literary text, laying thus down the basis of comparative literature in Japan. The branch specialists became aware what a wide horizon they were required when encountering the different cultures. They were not allowed to be nationalistic and nor could they be indifferent towards other cultures, which led to an apparent and temporary impasse for the Japanese comparatists: "Japanese comparatists often feel themselves torn between the need to employ a multicultural approach and a desire to preserve their own cultural identities. This inner conflict surfaces in the different roles comparatists play: at home, they focus on the universal aspects present in their native literatures. Abroad, they emphasize the significance of their cultural heritage."²

René Étiemble proposed a solution to this crisis, also signalled by the Japanese researchers. Étiemble, who talked about the "new humanism" and "universalism", who wrote about Chinese and Western poetry, and who followed Y. Kagami and Lewis W. Bush who published *Japanalia, Reference Book to Things Japanese* in Tokyo, in 1937, brought in his turn – among other writings – contemporaneous confessions on the "insinuation" of Europe and America in Japan.³

Carrying on the French scholar's ideas, Adrian Marino completed the definition given in 1969 by Owen Aldrige to comparative literature in his collection of essays *Comparative Literature: Matter and Method*. For Aldrige the object of study of this discipline would be a national literature compared to another/other national literature(s): "Briefly defined, comparative literature can be considered the study of any literary phenomenon from the perspective of more than one national literature or in conjunction with another intellectual discipline or even several",⁴ adding to it the dimension of the psychological, historical and sociological context. The specialist's attention is reoriented towards the relation of literature to history, society and to itself. The consequences would be most beneficial. Methodologically and theoretically⁵

¹ *Ibid.* p. 39.

² *Ibid.* pp. 42–43.

³ See René Étiemble, *Japanalia*, In Romanian translation by Tea Preda, in: "Secolul 20" (The 20th Century), 1972/6–7, pp.146–150.

⁴ Apud Charles Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵ See Adrian Marino, Où situer la "littérature universelle"?, in: *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, 1975/3, pp. 64–81.

comparative literature would step out from an exclusive geographical localization, becoming “worldwide”, while the historical category – inevitably subject to evolution and development – would expand towards “universality”. Space and time tend to expand and superpose, to transform into a unitary cultural knowledge, without guaranties of any kind. The comparative literature proposed by the “new comparatist” can testify in this sense: “... the new comparatist perspective proposes a new humanism without boundaries, oriented toward a unity of attitudes, preoccupations and ideas, which will certainly be predominant in the twenty-first century. So tomorrow’s world will not be ‘cosmopolitan’, but universal, in the plain sense of the term.”¹

“Do I have the right to speak about these cultures to which I do not belong?”² *Am I entitled to speak about a culture that I do not belong to?* – the comparatists ceaselessly wonder. In the same order of ideas, could one preoccupied with universal literature but born in a certain cultural horizon, understand completely the difference, for example, between the relation towards the model in the Occident, where the new, the original is primary, and in the Orient, where what has already been said is emphasized, and the real threat is not to be “traditional”?³ Or how could the fact be interpreted that the terms of “lyric” and “narrative”, having a long history in Europe, are recent terms in China, and how could the fact be explained that the Chinese “fu” cannot be translated to any European language?!

The difficulties signalled by the specialists are multiple and various. Only a “universal literature”, “reviewed”, interpreted as a “dynamic concept” with an open content and signification, permanently enriching, joined to the changes of the age could cover the conception and definition of this research domain. The “temporal (historical) comparatism”, doubled by the “geographical” one could redefine what Goethe called *Weltliteratur*, opening itself up to universality. According to Marino: “La littérature universelle prend ainsi des allures et des dimensions (vraiment) mondiales. Elle est constituée par ‘l’ensemble des littératures nationales’, de ‘toutes les littératures, vivants ou mortes, dont nous avons gardé des traces écrites, ou seulement orales, et ce, sans

¹ Adrian Marino, “European” and “World Literature”, op. cit., p. 307.

² Charles Bernheimer, op. cit., p. 9.

³ Cf. Earl Miner, Some Theoretical and Methodological Topics for Comparative Literature, in: *Poetics Today*, Vol. 8, 1987, No.1, pp. 124, 128.

discrimination langagière, politique ou religieuse'. Expression d'un véritable oecuménisme littéraire."¹

This might also explain why the book on Étiemble was translated to Japanese, the author confessed.² A book that appeared at a large Western publishing house, in which an eulogy is made to the East-West relationships, to the Far Eastern, "exotic", literature, including the Japanese, could not let pass unnoticed such a great oriental culture as the Japanese, now interested in the international exchange of ideas in various fields. "The present work which discusses so pertinently the actual problems of comparative literature – admit the translators in the *Postscript* – contains precious suggestions for the future of comparative literature in Japan. We engaged into this translation with the conviction that it contains stimulating suggestions for the future study of comparative literature in Japan. We hope that this book shall be useful in the jump that comparative literature has to make in order to become a new science, corresponding to the requirements of the age." ("Hikaku bungaku no konnichitekina mondai o senei ni ronjite iru gencho ga, waga kuni no hikaku bungaku kenkyû no shôrai ni taishite mo jûyôna jisa o fukumu mono de ari, nihon hikaku bungakukai e no shigekitekina teigen to nari uru ni chigai nai to kakushin shite yakushutsu o kokoromita. Honsho ga, jidai ni fusawashii atarashii gakumon to shite no hikaku bungaku no hzaku ni yakutateba saiwai de aru.")³

The *Postscript* in what follows the chapters of the book are succinctly presented, the translation of the titles being true to the letter and the spirit of the original: *Echianburu no hihantekisentôshugi* (*Le militantisme critique d'Étiemble*); *Tôzai kankei* (*Relations Est-Ouest*); *Hankokkashugi* (*Antinationalisme*); *Yôroppa chûshinshugi ni kôshite* (*Contre l'eurocentrisme*); *Teikokushugi oyobi shokuminchishugi ni kôshite* (*Contre l'impérialisme et le colonialisme*); *Kokusaishugi, sekaishugi, fuhenshugi* (*Internationalisme, cosmopolitisme, universalisme*); *Shokankei. Kôryû. Kyôryoku.* (*Relations, échanges, coopération*); *Jiyûna komyunikashon* (*Communications libres*); *Atarashii*

¹ Adrian Marino, Réviser la littérature universelle (I), in: *Synthesis*, no. VIII, Bucharest, The Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, 1981, p. 200.

² See Monica Gheț, „Comparatismul militant” – un început de „globalizare”, (Militant Comparativism – a Beginning of Globalisation), Interview with Adrian Marino, in: *Observator cultural* (Cultural Observer), 2003, no. 186, 16.09–22.09., p. 6.

³ Adrian Marino, *Tatakau Hikaku Bungaku...*, p. 214.

hyūmanizumu ni mukete (Pour un nouvel humanisme); Atarashii hikakubungakusha ni mukete (Pour un nouveau comparativiste). The chapter *Tōzai kankei* is especially emphasized in the *Postscript* of the translation. Passages from the original text are quoted in it stating that the literature of the different nations is equal in value (“the classical Chinese literature is not inferior to the masterpieces of American or European literature”). Some of these quotations refer to the influence – this time operating in the opposite direction – of the Oriental culture upon the Western one (“the Noh theatre has renewed the methods of dramatic composition in Europe and America”), suggesting that only comparative literature could fully understand the complexity of the different relations and influences between cultures: “In fact the complicated problems occurring between East and West, that is between the Asian and European peoples, can only be clarified by comparative literature. (“Jissai ‘higashi’ to ‘nishi’, tsumari ajia to yōroppa no bungaku oyobi ryōsha no kankei ga motarasu fukuzatsuna mondai o akirakani dekiru no wa hikaku bungaku o oite hoka ni nai.”)¹ The Japanese translators also noticed that the multiple points of view, applied by the author of the book while discussing his theme, are approaches, which often seem to be tributary to the ideological. However, – the Japanese experts also added – taking into account that we are talking about a researcher belonging to the East-European space, this fact seems to be natural.²

Though not at all a novelty, it happens also today that some voices consider universalism a disguised form of Eurocentrism.³ Thus they attempt to demonstrate that such concepts as “humanism”, “liberal democracy” and “universality” belong exclusively to Western cultures, being impossible to operate with them in some other culture: “... these categories, normally conceived to be essential, universal, and abstract as to be applicable to non-Western cultures, are actually socio-culturally and historically specific to the (modern) West.”⁴ In this way the fact of comparing literatures to each other can lead through its negative side to a form of imperialism. In his turn, Adrian Marino⁵ saw this possibility of interpreting universality as a potential destroyer of the specific of a

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 213–214.

² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

³ Takayuchi Yokota-Murakami, *Don Juan East/West. On the Problematics of Comparative Literature*, Suny Series: “The Margins of Literature”, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 164–168.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Où situer la “littérature universelle”?*, pp. 67–68.

national literature; however, exacerbated nationalism may make impossible the meeting of a culture with another. The comparatists' attention was attracted again by this paradox some decades later, registering and analyzing once again the eternal crisis of comparative literature: "The more literatures you try to compare, the more like a colonizing imperialist you may seem. If you stress what these literatures have in common – thematically, morally, politically - you may be accused of imposing a universalist model that suppresses particular differences so as to foster the old humanist dream of man's worldwide similarity to man. If, on the other hand, you stress differences, then the basis of comparison becomes problematic, and your respect for the uniqueness of particular cultural formations may suggest the impossibility of any meaningful relation between cultures."¹

The debates on the definition of "world literature", and on the object that comparative literature should study continue, the discussions having already some results. While an article² published in the second half of the past century noticed how slowly the signification of the word "world" in the phrase "world literature" shifted from "western" to "western+oriental", today a comparison between the Japanese novel Murasaki Shikibu *Genji Monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*) and Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is no longer surprising, as it is supported by the comparativist researches, for example, Donald Keene's researches dedicated to Japanese literature. The comparatist's necessary work instruments, such as literary encyclopaedias, (*Encyclopaedia of Literature*) or the bibliographic collections (*Bibliography of Comparative Literature*, *The Guide to Comparative Literature*) at the present already contain a great variety of materials, including the masterpieces of universal literature: "Gilgamesh, the Panchatantra, the Arabian Nights, the Bhagavadgita, the Noh plays, Chinese poetry, the Tale of Genji, Kalidasa's Sakuntala, the Wisdom of the East Series Hafiz of Shiraz, the Jakata, All Men Are Brothers, and Monkey."³ Thus they approached much that, which Adrian Marino called the "ideal library".⁴ The "multicultural" canon had won the case. On the one hand, the diversity of the world's literary production is taken into account, however, on the

¹ Charles Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

² G. L. Anderson, "Cathay and the Way Thither": Oriental Literature in the World Literature Program, in: *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 40, 1956, No. 6 (Oct.), pp. 316–318.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

⁴ Adrian Marino, *Où situer la „littérature universelle“?*, p. 66.

other hand, it is important that this literary production should be representative for each culture, suggesting thus the intrinsic relationship between literature and the culture it represents.

No doubt, the issue raised by the comparativist research is far from being solved through simple anthologies or compendiums of universal literature: "I do not think – some specialists state – that the cultivation of multilingualism and multiculturalism alone would solve the problems faced by comparative literature simply because multilingualism and multiculturalism are already part of comparative literature's constitutive, disciplinary features."¹ However, "universal literature" seems to open up many horizons as it includes *all* literature from the West and from the East, the Oriental and the Occidental ones. I have always considered – revealed Adrian Marino² – that this conception is the real base of "free communications" (from an ideological point of view) and of the definition of "comparativist literature" (from the perspective of literary theory).

The comparativist's task has become to revalorize literature along its two coordinates, its individuality and its political and social implications. "One of the major tasks facing literary scholars today is a renewed articulation of the value of literature which respects both its individual, subjective aspects – among them, the sensual pleasure of verbal craftsmanship; the delightfully inconsequential play of reality and illusion; the temporary liberation from time and the entry into what Maurice Blanchot calls the space of one's own death – and its social and political implications and imbrications."³ The comparativists – Adrian Marino seemed to conclude in every page in which he discussed "militant comparativism" – are ready to assume this task based on their knowledge on the construction and operation of literature in different cultures. In this era of "multiculturalism" and "globalization" (the "militant comparativism" which I had theorized once, stated the Romanian researcher at some time or other,⁴ cultivated a beginning of globalization "*avant la letter*") the literary comparatists' dilemmas seem to have found an answer to the questions that they generated.

¹ Rey Chow, In the Name of Comparative Literature, in: Charles Bernheimer (ed.), *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 109.

² Monica Gheț, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³ Charles Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴ Monica Gheț, *op. cit.*, p. 6.