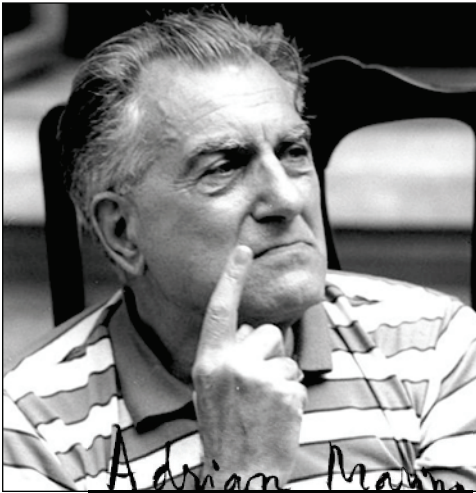


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# P R O F I L E

## Neo-Humanism Based on the Awareness of the Universal

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**T**HE VALORISATION of every culture, decentralization, the equivalence of universal values, as opposed to linguistic chauvinism, religious fanaticism, and racist extremism are the main research directions recommended by Adrian Marino in order to regenerate world comparative studies. The Romanian critic and ideologist worked in a critical period, a fact already pointed out in the 1950s by Étiemble or Wellek, and also reaffirmed by the specialized literature in 1995 (see Bernheimer 1995, 2–17). Therefore, for Adrian Marino, comparative literature as a material for “academic” study no longer met the demands of the age; it was actually necessary to redefine the object and methods of the discipline which should become common for Western and Eastern comparatists. As he asserted, from the point of view of a “new comparative spirit,” other objectives

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and procedures were necessary in order for a research domain to more easily traverse the boundaries between nations. But, in the light of the new horizon of study and of the changes in perspective it implied, the specialist's conviction comes as a natural consequence: comparative (world) literature can no longer remain neutral towards its ideological dominant and cannot go on showing indifference to the political aspect and the social context. The research proposed by comparative science must be transformed from a positivistic one, simply analyzing facts as "sources" of influence, in terms of circulation of literary themes, etc., to an involved, "militant" science, which would serve East–West relationships through a set of materials focusing on anti-nationalism, anti-Europocentrism, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, universalism, cooperation, free communication in the name of a new humanism: "La littérature comparée, c'est l'humanisme" (Étiemble 1988b, 72).

Adrian Marino's work was animated by the universalist point of view provided in the study of comparative literature by Étiemble, the creator of the collection "Connaissance de l'Orient," founded in 1956 under the auspices of UNESCO and the Gallimard Publishing House, where numerous Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Persian, Vietnamese, etc. masterpieces had been published. René Étiemble, nicknamed "the *enfant terrible* of French comparativism," had already proposed in his study "Comparaison n'est pas raison" that the historicist position be renounced in comparative analyses. Both conservatism and nationalism are toxic factors, considered the French comparatist, in the study of the literary-cultural phenomenon and only by liberating comparative science from the constraints of a rigid interpretative system can one facilitate the creation of a comparativism mediating between European and Arabic or Chinese thinking, militating for the revaluation of all literatures of the world: "La première des tâches qui s'imposent donc aux comparatistes, désormais, c'est de renoncer à toute variété de chauvinisme et de provincialisme, de reconnaître enfin que la civilisation des hommes, où les valeurs s'échangent depuis des millénaires, ne peut être comprise, goûtée, sans référence constante à ces échanges, dont la complexité interdit à qui que ce soit d'ordonner notre discipline par rapport à une langue ou un pays, entre tous privilégiés" (Étiemble 1988b, 68).

An honest comparative approach should, for instance, try to emphasize the relationship of the Japanese literature of the Meiji period (1868–1912) with English or French literature; an adequate analysis would consequently study the influence of English and Italian literature on the Japanese writer Natsume Soseki or that of French literature on another Japanese author, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, in the same way in which the myth of Oedipus or Prometheus can be recognized in Gide's or Cocteau's works (see Étiemble 1988b, 74). The spirit of a discipline is fulfilled only to the extent in which it tries to reconcile between

the requirements of an encyclopaedic approach and the limits imposed by the human condition, which limit knowledge of all world languages in order to have direct access to sources. Nevertheless, concluded Étiemble, Kochanowski's influence on Metropolitan Dosoftei's poem could not be discussed if one knew neither Polish, nor Old Romanian, just as the subject of *haikus* written in other languages could not be studied if its particularities in the Japanese which created it were not known. An encyclopaedic constitution would therefore help a comparatist not only to better understand factual correlations, but also to make value judgements in defence of every literature or in reference to the relationships between them. And this could lead, naturally, to the disappearance of both cultural and linguistic imperialism: "Demain, qui sait si le Serbe, le Tchèque, le Roumain, sans parler du Brésilien, ne seront pas indispensables au comparatiste européen?" (86)

A Romanian, an European and a citizen of the world, Adrian Marino was aware that no one becomes "universal" by an act of will and opted for a shift of perspective, suggested by Étiemble on comparative grounds. Acknowledging the French scholar's merits which resulted from his universalist and humanistic message, from his difference in horizon, mentality, and working style as compared to his fellow comparatists, the Romanian critic and ideologist considered him the only person able to lay the foundations of a renewed and combative—that is, "committed" and "militant"—comparativism. Adrian Marino, even argued his opinions in a volume, the first of this kind, dedicated to the specialist in comparative literature and the speaker of Oriental languages, entitled *Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, published by Gallimard Publishing House in 1982. He there tried to test whether the theory suggested by Étiemble was really comparative in the proper sense of the term, whether it was original, applied on another method or derived from another research field:

*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. (Marino 1982a, 12–13)*

The book on the militant comparativism of Étiemble written by a Romanian author has been well received not only by the public but also by specialized reviews inside and outside of France. It was reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* (10 December 1982), *Gazette de Lausanne* (7 August 1982), *La libre Belgique* (3 August 1982), *Rivista di Letterature moderne e comparate* (no. 2/1984), *World Literature Today* (1983) and then translated into other languages.

Adrian Marino's "sympathy" for Étiemble's militant comparativism, and, at the same time, the original ideas of the author as a theoretician and literary critic are mentioned in the preface to the Japanese translation of the volume *Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant* entitled *Tatakau Hikaku Bungaku* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1988), where this work is presented to the Japanese public as an appropriate discussion on the current problems of comparative literature. It includes stimulating suggestions not only for the Japanese literary world, but also in view of the steps comparative literature must take in order to become a new science, adequate to the demands of the age (see Frențiu 2007, 115–128). The book of the Romanian author starts a discussion which widens the theoretical horizon of interested readers and helps them to understand and interpret the issues of comparative literature, adding to their knowledge in the field of specialized literature. Promoting the equality in value of the literatures of the world (classical Chinese literature is not at all inferior to the masterpieces of European and American literature), the influence, in this case in the opposite direction, of Oriental culture on the Western one (the Noh theater renewed the methods of dramatic composition in Europe and America) suggests the fact that only comparative literature could thoroughly understand the complexity of the different relationships and influences between cultures.

In the attempt to test the comparative theory proposed by Étiemble, Adrian Marino also invoked the literature of Romania, a country which has always had a European vocation, being situated, as it has been mentioned several times, at the intersection of "dead empires" (*empires morts*). The "universal" awareness of Romanian literature goes hand in hand with national consciousness, pointed out Adrian Marino, emphasizing the contribution of Romanian comparatists, such as Lucian Blaga, Constantin Noica, or Mircea Eliade to the elucidation of the essential correlation between seemingly dichotomous concepts: world/national, big/small, major/minor literature. For Adrian Marino, their contribution found its place in the revolt initiated by Étiemble against any kind of imperialism, against the inequality which causes, for example, Romanian literature to be considered "forever" "minor" by the culture which gained "cultural hegemony": "Ils exigent un 'nouvel ordre de la culture,' fondé sur l'universalité de toutes les cultures du monde et surtout des cultures ignorées, méprisées, humiliées, exclues des grands circuits de la culture, non pas de leur faute mais à cause des damnées conditions historiques" (Marino 1982a, 78).

AS A CONTINUATION of Étiemble's ideas, Adrian Marino published a few years later at PUF Publishing House in Paris the volume *Comparatisme et théorie de la littérature* (1988), where he completed the definition of comparative literature, which he considered the "science of the future," adding to it the dimension of the psychological, historical, and sociological context. The attention of the Romanian comparatist was redirected towards the relationship between literature and history, literature and society, and, finally,—why not?!—the relationship of literature with itself. The hypothesis at work in the definition of literature was the notion of world literature consisting of all literatures of the world, big or small, eventually a literature "lue à travers et comme prolongement de la *littérature universelle*" (Marino 1988, 150). The consequences would be most beneficial. Methodologically and theoretically (see Marino 1975, 64–81) comparative literature would transcend 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 overlap, transforming into an unitary cultural knowledge, without guarantees 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 towards 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 full sense of the world" (Marino 1991, 307).

"Do I have the right to speak about these cultures to which I don't belong?" (Bernheimer 1995, 9), the comparatists ceaselessly wonder. Similarly, could someone preoccupied with world literature but born in a certain cultural environment completely understand the difference, for example, between the relation with the model in the Occident, on the one hand, where the new, the original has primacy, and in the Orient, on the other hand, where what has already been said is emphasized, and the real threat is not to be "traditional" (cf. Miner 1987, 124, 128)?! Or what could one infer from the fact that the terms "lyrical" and "narrative" have a long history in Europe, but are recent terms in China? And how could one explain the fact that the Chinese "fu" cannot be translated into any European language?!

The difficulties signalled by the specialists are multiple and various. Only a "world literature," "reviewed," interpreted as a "dynamic concept" with an open content and signification, permanently enriched, connected to the changes of the age, could cover the conception and definition of this domain. The "temporal (historical) comparativism," doubled by the "geographical" one could redefine what Goethe called *Weltliteratur*, opening itself up to universality: "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, vivantes ou mortes, dont nous avons gardé des traces écrites, ou seulement orales, et ce, sans discrimination langagière, politique ou religieuse.’ Expression d’un véritable œcuménisme littéraire” (Marino 1981, 200).

But historical investigation, based on critical or aesthetical analysis, ends, according to Étiemble (1988b, 136), in comparative poetics. This is what Adrian Marino tried to demonstrate in his book about comparativism and the theory of literature, showing that only a hermeneutical perspective and methodology could form the basis of a comparative poetics focused on the study of “world literature” (Marino 1998, 106), more precisely, of the “literariness” of “world literature,” along its three coordinates: geographical/spatial (where?), temporal (when?), and methodological (how?) (209). The hermeneutics thus proposed by Adrian Marino implies a change in the system of reading, “receptive” and “productive” at the same time, a shift from chronology and successive to simultaneity:

*La littérature (universelle) devient de la sorte à la fois une construction imaginaire, une sorte de fiction verbale, au niveau terminologique, et une réalité très concrète, au niveau phénoménologique: la totalité des œuvres littéraires, depuis toujours et du monde entier, ayant les mêmes structures, morphologies, phénoménologies, typologies, etc., repérables à chaque niveau d’analyse et de généralité. Voilà pourquoi la poésie de Mallarmé, d’Eminescu et Hafiz est, avant tout, de la poésie, et essentiellement la “même” poésie. L’évacuation d’Eminescu et de Hafiz en faveur de Mallarmé (et inversement) n’est pas motivée par des raisons esthétiques, mais culturelles et idéologiques. (Marino 1988, 165)*

But, if literature becomes a “total, general, and structurally unified reality, signifying the spatial and temporal dimension of *literariness*” (Marino 1998, 212), the generative model of literary works would lead to an inventory of a finite system of rules, which could explain the genesis of a literary work, as well as its construction by the aid of the element, at the same time “general” and “generalizing,” named by Adrian Marino, following Étiemble, “invariant” (63–91). What usually belonged to the category of the so-called “coincidences, similarities, parallelisms, analogies,” the undeniable reality of common elements in literary languages, works, and trends is here summed up in the concept of “invariant,” which becomes, in turn, a form of “universality”: “On peut d’ores définir—d’une manière très brève—l’invariant comme un élément universel de la littérature et de la pensée littéraire, comme un ‘caractère,’ un élément ou un trait ‘commun’ du discours littéraire ou de la pensée littéraire” (Marino 1988, 92).



But, to conceive literature as universality requires for all common elements inferred from literatures variable in time and space to be subordinated to this approach, offering a chance to every literature of the world to participate equally in an “invariant” unity. Étiemble had already suggested this idea through the “reading” he proposed for pre-Romantic European literature by means of Chinese literature: “Car si je puis éclairer tous les thèmes du préromantisme européen au XVIII<sup>e</sup> par des citations empruntées à la poésie chinoise d’avant le christianisme et des douze premiers siècles de l’ère chrétienne, c’est évidemment qu’il existe des formes, des genres, des invariants, bref que l’homme existe, et la littérature” (Étiemble 1988b, 111).

Adrian Marino thus laid the foundations of an approach to literature which originates in a global and universal vision, since individual discussion seems to coincide with the general one, and the particular seems to establish a dialectical relationship with the universal. The literary work remains thus, after all, an “individual reality,” but it also carries, inevitably, a “universal” significance (cf. Marino 1998, 112). Also, the assumption of the “universal consciousness” of literature could lead to its transformation into an “active” force, involved in the “ideological” actuality of current times (118).

Though not at all a novelty, it also happens today that some voices consider universalism a disguised form of Europocentrism (see Yokota-Murakami 1998, 164–168). They attempt to demonstrate that such concepts as “humanism,” “liberal democracy” and “universality” belong exclusively to Western cultures, being impossible to put into practice in some other culture: “these categories, normally conceived to be essential, universal, and abstract as to be applicable to non-Western cultures, are actually socioculturally and historically specific to the (modern) West” (155).

In his turn, Adrian Marino (1975, 67–68) saw this possibility of interpreting universality as a potential destroyer of the specificity of a national literature; however, exacerbated nationalism could make impossible the meeting of a culture with another. The comparatist’s attention was grasped again by this paradox some decades later, when he recorded and analyzed once more 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 the comparison becomes problematic, and your respect for the uniqueness of particular cultural formations may suggest the impossibility of any meaningful relation between cultures. (Bernheimer 1995, 9)*

The debates on the definition of “world literature” and on the object that comparative literature should study continue, the discussions having already had some results. While an article (cf. Anderson 1956) published in the second half of the previous 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 *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji) and Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* is no longer surprising. The comparatist’s necessary instruments, such as literary encyclopaedias (*Encyclopaedia of Literature*), or bibliographic collections (*Bibliography of Comparative Literature*, *The Guide to Comparative Literature*) already contain a great variety of materials, including the masterpieces of world literature. Thus they approached much of what Adrian Marino called the “ideal library.” 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 other hand, it is important that this literary production be representative for each culture, thus suggesting the intrinsic relationship between literature and the culture it represents.

The proposition offered by a “world literature” which includes *each and every* literature, adjoining Western literary texts to the Oriental ones, promised for Adrian Marino a great opening of horizons: “I have always considered 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)” (Marino, apud Gheț 2003, 5).

Therefore, the comparatist scholar’s task is to reevaluate literature along its two coordinates, its individuality and its social and political implications. Giving up Europocentrism, opening towards world literature, without value judgments dictated by a supreme hierarchical center, the ideological involvement of comparative research, the direct confrontation of social and political aspects imply, undoubtedly, openness towards universality. The new comparative science proposed by René Étiemble and taken up by Adrian Marino, a research field situated beyond the positions of positivistic and historical scholarship draws the attention of specialized studies to all the literatures of the world, from the East to the West, in a new comparative “spirit”:

*Le comparatisme “poétique” offre pourtant, pour toutes les raisons invoquées, au moins un cadre valable et valide à toute définition générale minimale de la littérature. Il permet d’échapper à la spécialisation excessive, à l’alexandrinisme formaliste, au fragmentarisme borné, à l’inhibition théorique, à la platitude d’un certain objectivisme qui se prétend “scientifique.” Il apporte une réponse à une certaine nostalgie essentielle, propre à toute pensée théorique et désireuse de synthèse. Il constitue un point de vue explicitement universaliste, ouvert à toutes les littératures du monde, de l’Ouest et de l’Est, sans barrières, interdits, tabous ou miradors. Il*



*marque un changement dans les systèmes stéréotypés et banalisés à l'excès. Il est, enfin, une méthodologie spécifique, qui peut coexister de droit et de fait avec les méthodes en cours, sans faire pourtant avec elles double emploi, dont la source demeure à la fois historique et herméneutique.* (Marino 1988, 312–313)

Comparatists, Adrian Marino seemed to conclude in all the pages where he discussed the new type of comparativism, are ready to assume the task of an integrative approach to Western and Oriental literatures, given the new theoretical and methodological foundations based on their knowledge about the structure and function of literature in different cultures. In the age of “multiculturalism” and “globalization,” Adrian Marino suggested a world literature based on a radically changed perspective, transformed from a speculative and deductive discipline into an inductive and experimental one, for the understanding and interpretation of which he provokingly recommended as a new “paradigm” built on a hermeneutical methodology.



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### **Abstract**

#### Neo-Humanism Based on the Awareness of the Universal

A Romanian, European and cosmopolitan scholar, Adrian Marino, opting for a new comparative science promoted in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by René Étiemble, contributed to the revitalization of the "comparative spirit" by placing the investigation of world literature on new theoretical and methodological grounds. The present study tries to point out the Romanian literary critic's contribution (articulated systematically according to a peculiar inner logic) to the reshaping of comparative research, as well as the original options he suggested for completely revising the traditional concepts and canons of academic comparativism which appeared inadequate for his age. Replacing the overly restrictive concept of "comparative literature," Adrian Marino proposed the idea of a world literature based on a radically changed perspective. He thus shifted the view from a speculative and deductive discipline to an inductive and experimental field, for the understanding and interpretation of which he recommended, provokingly, a new "paradigm," based on a hermeneutical methodology.

### **Keywords**

world literature, hermeneutics, militant comparativism, neo-humanism