

# In Memory of John Neubauer (1933-2015): A Foreword

## **Shang Biwu**

School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University  
800 Dongchuan Road, Minhang District, 200240, Shanghai, China  
Email: biwushang@sjtu.edu.cn

## **Nie Zhenzhao**

School of Chinese Language and Literature, Central China Normal University  
152 Luoyu Rd., Hongshan District, 430079, Wuhan, China  
Email: niezhenzhao@163.com

“The scholarly world, especially all of us who are concerned with comparative cultural study, are in debt to John Neubauer.”

— Mario J. Valdés

“Describing the many fields to which John (Neubauer) has made a significant contribution would take more space than we have available.”

— Mieke Bal

We were extremely saddened by the news that John Neubauer passed away on October 5, 2015, the time when we were in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> international Symposium on Ethical Literary Criticism held in Seoul and Busan, Korea. For years, John has been a major figure for our constant communications and heated discussions on various issues of common concern. It is quite unacceptable that he is no longer there.

John (known as János to his friends and families) was born in Budapest, on November 2, 1933. He spent his early life in Nazi-occupied Hungary before the Neubauers migrated to America. He traveled, stayed and worked in such places as Amherst, Princeton, and Pittsburgh in the States. It was in University of Pittsburgh that János spent a decade (1973–1983) consolidating his interest and reputation in Comparative Literature. In 1983, János, and his wife Ursula, an artist, and their daughters went back to Europe. With his colleagues, including the eminent scholar

Mieke Bal, János established the Comparative Literature Program in University of Amsterdam and worked there till his retirement. János's migration finds a perfect counterpart in his transcultural and comparative works, among which are *Bifocal Vision: Novalis' Philosophy of Nature and Disease* (University of North Carolina Press, 1971), *The Emancipation of Music from Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), *Cultural History After Foucault* (1999), and *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2007).

We got to know János by reading his edited collection *Cultural History After Foucault*, which was first appeared as an special issue in *arcadia: International Journal of Literary Culture* 33.1 (1998) and later published by Aldine Transaction in 1999. However, our exchange with János started in 2012, when we proposed a special issue on "Ethical Literary Criticism: East and West" to *arcadia*. When guest-editing this special issue, we stayed closely in touch with János, whose insightful comments, practical suggestions, kind encouragements, and enthusiastic support have accompanied us throughout this academic adventure. For his unfailing enthusiasm and overwhelming friendship, we feel extremely grateful at that point and beyond. For years, we have been waiting for János to recover from his sickness and preparing for his academic trip to China, which we believe, will be rather beneficial and rewarding to our colleagues and students. Unfortunately, our hope was broken on October 5, 2015.

János is an eminent scholar, sharp critic, brilliant editor, loyal friend, wonderful husband, and cheerful father. We feel very grateful to János and his two talent colleagues Prof. Vivian Liska and Prof. Vladimir Biti for their deep insight, unbiased evaluation and instructive comments that have brought ethical literary criticism from Chinato Western academiathrougha special issue of *arcadia*. In particular, we are most thankful for their thought-provoking general introduction which they departed from usual reluctance to underline the value of this new critical approach and to indicate how it could be further broadened for its persuasiveness.

János is an astute commentator with extraordinary vibrancy and rich knowledge. With much wisdom and philosophy, he writes to us that "I would be happy to participate in some form in reflections about your very stimulating theory. As far as I am concerned, the main issue is not the inclusion of this or that 'Western' thinker but rather to bring your theory in line with a key trans-cultural science, bio-cultural evolution. Your sharp separation of the physical (animal) body and consciousness need to be brought in line with the fusion of the two in cognitive (neural) science and evolutionary theory." Undoubtedly, his insightful comments

offer us much nutrition and encourage us to stride forward along lines of ethical literary criticism.

As is keenly observed by János, some of our arguments contradict those proposed by Theodor W. Adorno, Jacques Derrida or Giorgio Agamben and many other Western scholars. We have been thinking of these questions and planning to answer them in our future discussions. Regrettably, János could not read our papers addressing them, but we are sure that he would be happy to know that we have been trying to make our conceptual system more elaborated and persuasive.

In remembrance of János, we put off the publication of the third issue of *Forum for World Literature Studies* and decide to launch a special thematic cluster “Globalizing Literary History and World Literature: In Memory of John Neubauer (1933-2015).” Our proposal has been warmly received by János’s colleagues and friends, who have been working days and nights preparing their articles and personal notes, for which we feel much obliged. It is their John Neubauer-like professional ethic that has made this thematic cluster possible. In particular, we thank Ursula for sending us the most recent photo of János, whose smile will remain a constant encouragement for the rest of us to live and to work well. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the contributors of this thematic cluster, all of whom are closely related to János in one way or another: Vivian and Vladimir, for many years, have been his colleagues and co-editors of the journal *arcadia*; Tan Junqiang is his visiting scholar and later his Ph.D. student; Jüri Talvet has been his old friend, for whom János helped to establish the now famous Estonian Association of Comparative Literature.

Though János has left us, he will always be remembered by his love for his wife, his care for his daughters, his loyalty for his friends, and his scholarship and achievements in academics.

May him rest in peace.

责任编辑：杨革新