

A Patriarch of Militant Europeanism: Adrian Marino

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Abstract

The paper delineates the personality and work of Adrian Marino, a person with spectacular and protean character leading a marginal but febrile and authentic intellectual life, who made the attempt of remodelling a historical party, and set himself to the construction of a Transylvanian periodical essential for the democratic debate. A character neither popular, nor comfortable: the democratic ideologue proposing orientation towards the European Union not only on the scale of Romania's foreign alliances but also as a model of civilization.

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1. Europe in our country

The resurrection of Europeanism as an ideology in the post-communist Romania was accomplished in a villa in the centre of Cluj-Napoca, in the library of a great scholar – old in age, but not in spirit – in the years after the 1989 revolution.¹ At that time – after a two-year period when Ion Iliescu and his entourage believed that the autochthonous revolutionary verve could be satisfied by a Gorbachevist government of a Perestroika-Glastnost type – the arrest of the last president of the URSS, his ill timed release, and the dissolution of the communist colossus from the East, in 1991, threw the Romanian government into a persistent confusion for the oncoming years. The voice which could be heard by

¹ The texts gathered here under a common title appeared independently during the preceding year in the cultural reviews *Steaua*, *Idei în dialog* and, respectively, *Apostrof*. One of them was published in English in the scientific periodical *Studia Europaea*. Connected with one another, these texts gain a new relevance, reason for which we have brought them together here in order to emphasize their complementarity. Despite this fact, the author is aware that they can hardly reveal the complexities of the man of culture Adrian Marino whose work we have always admired discreetly but consequently.

anyone who wanted to listen, proposing the natural orientation towards the European Union – not only on the scale of Romania's foreign alliances but also as a model of civilization – was the voice of Adrian Marino. Through a series of articles, studies, essays and answers to investigations, Marino, who was a literary critic and a hermeneutist of encyclopaedic orientation until then, elaborated, between the years 1991–1994, that which was to become the content of the first Europeanist manifesto-book in Romania after the communism. Due to a fortunate coincidence, Silviu Lupescu editor at the European Institute from Iași, inaugurated his new publishing house, Polirom, in 1995 exactly with the volume *Pentru Europa. Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale* (For Europe. Romania's Integration. Ideological and Cultural Aspects). Moreover, this book seems to be also the last one published during Adrian Marino's lifetime; its second edition – revised and completed – has recently appeared in order to celebrate a decade since the establishment of the Polirom Publishing House.

This decade was enormously important for Romania and for the autochthonous ideas related to Europeanism whose patriarch was Adrian Marino. Meanwhile, the Democrat Convention¹ came to power in 1996 and this oriented the country firmly towards the EU and NATO. From this point on, due to Adrian Marino's ideas – whose prophetic content was incomprehensible for the previous government – the pro-Occidental political orientation became the objective faithfully followed by all responsible public forces and by every realist opinion leader. However, none of the official leaders hastened to acknowledge the historical merits of the thinker from the Grigorescu district in Cluj-Napoca. A bitter irony of fate, the Christian-Democratic National Peasants' Party – in the name of which he underwent long years of detention and house arrest – coming to power did not require Adrian Marino's services as a first line dignitary, as it would have been proper and wise to do. On the contrary, the tribulations from this party made the scholar to return more bitterly to his daily schedule of meditation on his notes and books, resulting in his six-volume construction *Biografia ideii de literatură* (The Biography of the Idea of Literature). However, in the meantime a publishing house

¹ The Democrat Convention won the Romanian elections in 1996 and their candidate Emil Constantinescu became president. The main purpose of the Democrat Convention was to form an effective opposition against the all-dominating National Salvation Front, a political force made up mostly of former second and third rank communists, which assumed leadership of the country after the 1989 revolution. (Translator's note)

from Craiova published the precious completion of *Pentru Europa* (For Europe), the anthology of the Romanian post-war Europeanist thinking *Revenirea în Europa* (Return into Europe). With generosity and phenomenal perspicacity – considering the myriads of publications that appeared after December 1989 –, Adrian Marino traced, copied and collected between the covers of this volume some of the most important texts written by Romanian authors urging that we should join the EU and the European list of values.

As I had been conducting a course of “European idea” at the Faculty of European Studies since the establishment of the Faculty in 1994, I was eager to include the two books – as soon as they appeared – into my list of compulsory readings, delighted to benefit from the results of Adrian Marino’s efforts to re-establish a tradition of our own which had formerly been represented by other illustrious voices as well. Thus, these books have become the basic bibliographical landmarks for the Europeanist generations formed at the university in Cluj. By the initiative of the philosophy professor Andrei Marga, the rector of the university at that time, the faculty had the privilege of inviting Adrian Marino to accept an award of excellence on 13th of January 1997. On this occasion he delivered a lecture in front of a full conference hall. The fully earned praises uttered by Andrei Marga, Nicolae Păun and by the author of the present paper expressed the publicly assumed awareness of the value that Adrian Marino represented for the community from Cluj, for Romania, and for the founding of the actual Europeanism in our country.

The real emulation aroused by the books and public interventions of the father of our Europeanism was also mirrored in the book-production of the intellectuals from Cluj regarding the European issue. The fact that Marino included in the second edition of the volume entitled *Pentru Europa* (For Europe) a bibliography of the domain, exempts me from the obligation of repeating the most significant titles. In this context I wish only to make a confession: the second part of my volume *Europa, o idee în mers* (Europe – a Progressing Idea), contains a short anthology, significant as an attempt of reconstructing the landscape of our Europeanism from the inter-war period. It was inspired by the model given in Adrian Marino’s anthology, which took into account the contributions from the next stage. I tried to create a work which would complete Marino’s book by reclaiming an occulted tradition from between the two World Wars. Far from keeping away from such an endeavour, the writer promptly commented it in the press in a comprehensive manner.

Unfortunately, such a febrile and authentic intellectual life, enormously stimulated by the personal example of the scholar – then in his seventies – could not overcome some marginality unless through some angry outbursts, generating debates. Although he was recognized by the writer generation of the eighties, he was elected the honorary leader of ASPRO (The Association of Professional Writers from Romania), and reviews of the capital – from 22 to *Cuvântul* – published his writings, Marino never assumed the central role that he deserved through his work. The appreciations received from civil society organizations – the award of the Faculty of European Studies, “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca; the ASPRO award; honorary member of the “Pro Europa” League – indicate where the reception of Adrian Marino’s cultural contribution was the promptest and accomplished on the highest level. Furthermore, I would allow myself to say that this is the most important forum, for in this space less submitted to official “modelling” and to the idiosyncrasies of the paper gods of the day took place the unreserved contact with the vigorous work of the thinker.

As I have – beginning with 1990 – discreetly witnessed the scholar’s last fifteen years of life, I can only underline my astonishment that his ebullience roused at each of our meetings. Talking fast, with baroque gestures, modulating his voice through inflexions impregnated with the most diverse connotations – in a Călinescian manner, prolonging the vowels and even touching high tonalities –, Adrian Marino was a spectacular and protean character. He made the attempt of remodelling a historical party, and he set himself to the construction of a Transylvanian periodical, essential for democratic debate, but mainly he tried to embody a new personage, neither popular, nor comfortable: the democratic ideologue of an age which was democratic by construction and which pretended to be post-ideological.

Today we realize that he succeeded in this metamorphose as well. Leaving this life, Adrian Marino – the late assistant of Călinescu, the late Gulag prisoner, the late literary critic and ideologue of our Europeanness – left behind a vast and complex cultural inheritance, whose value is difficult for us to estimate at present due to its amplitude and import.

2. The Marino-Grigurcu dialogue on the European integration

Now, when Adrian Marino has taken leave of us passing into the pages of the history of our contemporaneous culture, arrives the hour of the first balanced evaluations of this enormous thinker of the age that we

are living in. The preliminaries of such estimation have already happened. One of the first persons who reflected on the ideas sketched by Marino in his books and essays spread by reviews was Gheorghe Grigurcu. His volume *În jurul libertății* (Around Liberty)¹ contains two significant texts in this order of ideas. Both are polemic commentaries on the positions illustrated by the author of the manifesto-volume *Pentru Europa* (For Europe).² Their review justified in the first place by the sagacity and pertinence of observation, also has the gift of more clearly highlighting the accents of the ideas of the Europeanist Adrian Marino.

In the essay *Orient versus Occident?* (East versus West?),³ Gheorghe Grigurcu observed that the juxtaposition of the two horizontal extremes of the European continent and civilization, made by the thinker from Cluj for methodological and stylistic reasons in order to contrast the discrepancies of the two ways of being European, was not necessarily adequate. "East and West represent two at least apparently conflicting impulses of Romanian history."⁴ By this definition Grigurcu placed the coordinates of our historical development in an idealist, spiritualist horizon, which almost subsumable to a psychoanalysis of civilization. Thus, he shifted the discussion on a scale of mega-tendencies which Marino, the adept of a militant attitude and style, moving exclusively in the sphere of ideas and referring continuously to pragmatic-factual reference points,⁵ did not consider opportune to attend. He preferred to define Europe as active ideology and politics,⁶ programmatically placing in parenthesis the ineffable aspects, factually hard to demonstrate, eventually having metaphysical relevance. Proceeding in this way, neither of the two authors was wrong; but they did not meet either. The one preferred to recover the potential unexploited – and even incriminated – by the other, namely the entire – speculative – scheme of mechanisms and structures that delineate the manifestations of a spirituality configured otherwise than the one exhaustible within the terms of the rational. The other assumed the rigor to speak only of that which can be proved and of the facts which can be measured by means of the spirit. We are situated at the meeting point of Enlightenment with Romanticism, so to speak, in the cultural space crossed by philosophical

¹ Gheorghe Grigurcu, *În jurul libertății*, Iași, Timpul Publishing House, 2002.

² Adrian Marino, *Pentru Europa*, second, enlarged edition, Iași, Polirom, 2005.

³ Pp. 138–144.

⁴ P. 138.

⁵ Adrian Marino, *Pentru Europa*, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

sensibilities such as Giambattista Vico's, Herder's, Goethe's as well as of other precursors of the orientations that the 19th century was to germinate. While Marino seemed to be a last adept of the Enlightenment – metamorphosed, however, into a “pașoptist” inspired by the idea of a Europe united around the democratic idea based on the radiant equilibrium of reason –, Gheorghe Grigurcu, who as a lyrical author could not be unfamiliar with the tremor of the “invisible”, had something from Hölderlin's and Novalis' unappeased appetency towards the glamour of the classic antiquity remodelled by some sort of totalizing sensibility. In the text which I have referred to before, Gheorghe Grigurcu was criticizing the restrictive perspective “characteristic to the Enlightenment based on the image of an exclusively rational, administrative, thrifty Europe”. Likewise, in the second text I mentioned, entitled “Cum putem fi europeni” (How Can We Be Europeans?),¹ he became much more explicit. The recurrent European Enlightenment – he said – must be subjected to a critical examination, being characterized by an “exclusively rationalist discourse that abolishes irrational values: religion, metaphysics, myth, revelation, the sentiment of tragic, metaphor, style, etc. namely – creation.” This discourse would hide “the most vivid, deep and fertile side of the European spirit, the aspect of humanity related with the absolute.” Forsaking this, integration is limited. Thus we place ourselves “on the line of a sterile average, of an administrative-cultural moderateness, encyclopaedically desolate.” The danger would be an “excess of convenience under which contrarities smoulder and seeds of reserves are concealed which will ruthlessly rise up at a given moment”.²

Rightist culture is also European, expressing values specific to Europe. One must take into consideration values such as “«mysticism» and the «nebulous» and the «irrational» and the «experiencing» and «authenticity» and the «nationalist-intuitive» reflection, without necessarily being... anti-European, since they manifested themselves in Europe, in concordance with other tendencies and orientations from other parts of the continent.”³ Grigurcu asked himself: “Why should we resort to a unilateral impoverished Europeanism? Why should we not enhance the concept with everything that would belong as a value, without prejudices and aprioristic schemes, to its sphere? Why should we consider its natural, specific components obstacles?”⁴

¹ Pp. 163–174.

² P. 164.

³ P. 169.

⁴ P. 170.

In this way – in Gheorghe Grigurcu's opinion – Adrian Marino would mock exactly the "basis of creation and of spiritual life." The critic from Târgu Jiu recommended as a remedy the substitution juxtaposition for complementarity. Whether we like it or not, interferences – otherwise advantageous – take place anyway. Along the gradual westernization of the Eastern elite, proclaimed by Marino, the reverse process should also be seen ("an inhalation of the Eastern spirit, in the spiritual sense, under the sign of metaphysics and of creation").

Gheorghe Grigurcu was right in all these. Any diminishing of the entirety of impulses and manifestations of a Europe in full ebullience – not, as it was once believed, touched by an irremediable crisis of values – remains a partial one. However Solomonic might such a judgment seem, Adrian Marino was not mistaken either. After a century when most of Europe's mistakes had been caused by irrationalism, mystical spirit, and mythologies fuelled by a passéist enthusiasm and an ideologically manipulated visionariness, after different combinations of authoritarianism and dictatorial tendencies, to prefer a directly and openly assumed clear rationalism together with a democratic scale of values became a priority in any case. According Grigurcu, Marino, being attached to a materialist and pragmatic Europe, was in fact situated in a symbolic horizon (because synthetic and dichotomic, expressing everything through one and not through a diversity of features). However, from all this, the impoverishment of the European model might result. The central culture, conceived as a solution by Marino, might soon gain "a centralist atmosphere... monopolist, breaking polycentrism."¹ At my turn, I would however not equate the hunt for ideas and the didactic mission of an enlightened rationalism – as the one practiced by Adrian Marino – with materialism. As to the mediation between the extremes of thinking through a formal pondering and through the attachment to the values of a centrist moderation, we are far, for the moment, from a possible installation of a tyranny of the petit bourgeois spirit against which the artistic avant-garde rose once (shifted later in several cases towards fascism or communism).

Grigurcu formulated punctual objections regarding both the West and East. If the desecration of the West seemed to be for him a partial truth, he was positive that neither Russian culture can be excluded from the European spirit. The critic of boundless Europeanism was not wrong, the West keeps intact – or at least seems to be apt to reconstitute –

¹ P. 174.

an attention towards the sacred that seemed to be decreased in the 20th century on a few sections. Nevertheless, the laicization of the state, a certain anticlerical and agnostic tradition present on the level of western political culture in last two decades is unquestionable. Today it proves to be vigorous enough so that the forging of the new communitarian Europe should not obsessively depend on the religious confession, and political, juridical or economical criteria becoming more important in joining the EU.

What regards Russia, this “other Europe”, which carries on the Byzantine ecumenist projects in a sense and embraces plenty suggestions coming from the Asian horizon, if none contests her Europeanism, on the other hand the Europeanization process can be continued. There are other obstacles as well in front of a conjunction between Russia and the West; and they should be discussed separately. Inaugurated in Romania by P. P. Carp and then continued by Nae Ionescu and D. Gusti, the discussion deserves to go on due to its particular interest for our geopolitical evolution.

For the time being I would only say that the debate on European themes between Adrian Marino and Gheorghe Gricurcu deserves to be recorded as an invitation to a lucid discussion on the most significant tendency of the Romanian public life in the post communist period.

3. Adrian Marino's lights

In Adrian Marino's book *Politică și cultură. Pentru o nouă cultură română* (Politics and Culture. For a New Romanian Culture)¹ the present-day reader shall undoubtedly recognize right from the (sub)title a manifesto signed by the leading critic of the first post-communist decade. Frankly speaking, hard as one may look around, there is no such a book in – not at all insignificant – book-production of that period. Neither Ion Bogdan Lefter's and Gheorghe Crăciun's endeavours of elaborating theories on the margin of literary criticism of the eighties and of other active contingencies on the active market, nor the excellent literary duels of Gheorghe Grigurcu, nor other endeavours are equal to the wide horizons without complexes and the directness lacking complaisance of the diagnoses and of Marino. What makes the reading of the pages into an indispensable exercise of the free and powerful spirits is, however, the short-circuiting tension transmitting the author's interior rush in settling

¹Adrian Marino, *Politică și cultură. Pentru o nouă cultură română*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 1995.

his accounts with a political era short in cultural achievements, the feverish invitation to the crusade aimed at the reconquering of national dignity in culture.

As the author states in the preface, the book was conceived in order to continue another volume of essays, not less programmatical. We are speaking about *Pentru Europa. Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale* (1995), which together with *Politică și cultură* constitutes a diptych of Romanian civic and cultural prosperity in a paradigm of occidentalist synchronism and of critical over-taking, without concessions, of tradition as a premise to the commitment in great creative efforts with lasting results. As the author himself qualifies it; it is "a book fundamentally critical towards the past, profoundly implicated in the immediate reality and energetically oriented towards the future." From this methodical reference to the three temporal modes the rigorous and systematic spirit of evaluation and projecting is discernible. Marino does not commit the mistake of so many other confreres of converting one in the other or of interchanging these. For him the past does not become a substitute for the present, nor – any the less – for the future. He neither mistakes the ensuing with the actual moment in an operation so dear to the utopians. The preparation of future through a good anchoring in the present, mediated by the selection of the values of the past by means of reason constituting a valid critical judgment – here it is a program so much anti-impressionist and coherent, as it is revolutionary in its own way. Aware of the trump cards of such a position, Marino asserts: "The actual Romanian culture has a prime necessity for this kind of books as well, as «personal» as possible. Nonconformist and combative. Well-documented and proved with arguments. As supple as possible in the debate of ideas, but intransigent in conclusions. Free, honest, well-intentioned thinking, expressed until the end and without complexes." Indeed, by so many characteristics few from the contributions of the last fifteen years manage to stand against even in part. Even so, they exist and should not be under-estimated. And on some instant someone might create a list and discuss them, offering thus the image of a brave mountaintop in its relative isolation... Marino even proposes his own list effective around the year 1995. In its content are names like Andrei Pleșu, H.-R. Patapievici, Alina Mungiu, Gabriel Andreescu, Andrei Cornea, Sorin Antohi, Stelian Tănase, Dan Pavel. When the other articles and essays or interviews and answers to the questionnaires scattered by Adrian Marino through the reviews of the 1995–2000 period was published, it became clear that the list had changed: some of the

mentioned ones leaving it, other newcomers completing it. Just a few examples, one from the first, the other two from the last category: while Andrei Pleșu who ran in direct conflicts with the author commented in this study and was left out, the name of Marta Petreu and probably of Ruxandra Cesereanu or of the historian Marius Oprea completed – without exhausting – the anthology from the preface of *Politică și cultură* (Politics and culture).

The situation from that time has changed in any other aspects as well. Many have grasped the quasi-aphoristic idea of the essayist that “a project can always be amended and improved. A non-existent project makes place only to vacuum and total sterility. Only ideas pull us out – essentially – from nothingness and sub-history.” The idea of premeditating a track from the end of which to condense the affluence of revelation of the itinerary through a manifestation in reality of the invisible object from the intimacy of your imaginative and perseverant way of thinking is not always a certitude in the life of the surrounding institutions and characters. But it is certain that at least sometimes, due to the clearness of formulation and of its classic ostentation, Marino’s thought has reverberated in the consciences reflecting from these throughout actions.

There is much truth and intuition also in the view that “...in the actual state the ideological text – in order to be thoroughly accessible to a medium level as high and as large as possible – needs to be more than a mere newspaper publication, but less than an academic study...” Formulation is a precaution from the panoply of the Enlightenment practiced by Marino and ironized by others. It would have been perhaps otherwise if the “Enlightenment” identified here would have benefited by other readings than the historian ones – which circumscribe only the 18th century, and seldom the first part of the following decade” – or the philosophical ones in the line of Habermas. There are countries like Denmark, where right in the moment I am writing these, the educational policies identifying the entire life as a map of permanent and diversified instruction on ample popular dimensions, give incredible results. But there Gruntvig is not seen as an outdated 20th century personality and the thought of a golden mediocrity is not instantly qualified either, without reflection, worthy of contempt, geniality remaining what it is: just a happy exception. The entire logic is turned over, the solitude sacralized by the encounter with the great performance being in contrast with the scheme of a spiritual elevation along the others. Thus instead the brilliant’s glitter, the diadem is celebrated, the opponent of the unique is –

salutary and through the chances of affirmation that it offers to many – the gearing, the system. And not least of all, the upsurge that generates competition ceases to be egoist and self-celebrating, being replaced by generosity and openness.

I never tire of saying: through the concentration of attitudes and thoughts of great goodwill, perfectly reasonable in superficial context, exalted, passéist and to a certain degree rather sensationalist and irrational, Adrian Marino becomes – and has become – a kind of a civic-liberal prophet and a democrat intransigent, biting and sagacious. Sooner or later, someone shall doubtlessly claim his legacy so hastily deserted by spirits of seeming affinity.