

Adrian Marino – The Impenitent Critic of Ideas

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Abstract

The paper presents the evolution of Adrian Marino's work from the monographic volume about Alexandru Macedonski to the impressive six volume literary encyclopaedia, *The Biography of the Idea of Literature*. An uncompromising personality, Adrian Marino was irreversibly attracted to the concepts of plurality, tolerance, democracy and he never abandoned the critical spirit. As a critic of ideas he analyzed the Romanian literary critical, political and cultural tradition and tried to shape its present and future course according to his liberal and neo-pașoptist ideals.

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Adrian Marino's oeuvre is essentially significant through its multiple layers of reference, and through the spiral of its evolution, with all the levels and articulations disciplined by the inexhaustible exploration of the "basic intuitions".

The two volumes comprising the "Macedonskian monographic system" (*Alexandru Macendonski's Life and Work*) had been devised before the traumatic experience of the "Gulag" and were published after 1965. These volumes represent a compact literary historical synthesis in which the biographic "interpretation" attempts to sketch the moral portrait on a strictly documentary basis and a striving towards exhaustiveness.

The author's natural appetite for defining structural antinomies (the impossibility of reconciliation between reality and dream in the emir-poet's consciousness), for discovering the ideological principle which

governed Macedonski's spirit (*pașoptism*)¹, for the method of delimitations and concentric references on the level of ideas (aesthetic, political-social, philosophical, etc.) could already be observed in these early works, but the dismissal of the temptation to follow Călinescu's aphoristic formulation was also present in them.

The scholar would continue to seek his own ways, which assure him the independence and freedom of thinking. The *Întroducere în critica literară* (Introduction to Literary Criticism) is more than an academic treaty. It is a work of critical creation experimenting the technique of quotes, of "sedimentary reading", each proposition being richly illustrated with representative references to both Romanian and foreign works. This was a subtle way to indicate the need for "new, multilateral, large, specialized" information in the isolated circumstances of the Romanian intellectual. The syncretism of the Marinian style was prefigured in this work; the enumerative structure of sentences described by Sorin Alexandrescu in terms which denominated the excess: "what you expected to be reserved, controlled, symmetrical, now turns into a baroque arborescence, the general outlines are dissolved in the details, *the original work becomes the biography of the work*."²

Adrian Marino, fascinated by Baltasar Gracián – whom he confessed to have temperamental affinities with – and his *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, manifested himself as an essayist of the alternative complementarity. Indeed, his "travel"-books *¡Olé! España, Carnete Europene* (European Notebooks), *Prezențe românești și realități Europene*, (Romanian Presences and European Realities), *Evadări în lumea liberă*, (Escapes into the Free World) are, above all, documents of insubordination and protest against the abnormalities generated by an oppressive, totalitarian government. Dominantly polemical (liberation from the "Dinicu Golescu-complex"), these books have an explicit ideological meaning. The governing idea of these febrile, both descriptive and analytical confessions is not culture – as one might think at first sight –, but **freedom**. Freedom as a mental state. "To have a physical and intellectual space at your disposal, this is freedom", Adrian Marino wrote. To find the "free world" again, but also to find internal freedom; to

¹ The ideology of Revolutions of 1848 in the Romanian countries, aiming at the modernization and Europeanization of Romanian culture. *pașopt* meaning *patruzeci și opt*, that is forty-eight. (Translator's note)

² "Un european: Sir Adrian Marino" (A European: Sir Adrian Marino), In: *Identitate în ruptură*, (Identity in Rupture), Bucharest, Univers Publishing House, 2000, p. 112.

liberate yourself from any kind of inhibition, to communicate and show solidarity with the western spirit on the threshold of a century in a “united Europe” are ideas, obsessions, themes which must also be understood as acts of resistance to the forms of isolation, autarchy, dirigisme, levelling, amateurism and improvisation characterizing Romania in the last few decades.

¡Olé España, reprinted in 1995, remained an exciting confession of these intense struggles. The inevitably bookish contact with the Iberian space was completed with experiences searched for in the social and human sphere. Marino used to dive under smooth surfaces. His favourite milieu was always a closed space (although he did not avoid the crowded streets, the exuberance of market places, in a word, the rhythm of everyday life): a hotel room, the reading room of the library, the home of an acquaintance, the solemn interior of a museum. The eye attentively records the mechanisms of everyday existence without being greatly surprised; the course of life is dominated by the discipline of culture. In contrast with this vital stability is the tension full off expectation; the eye discovers the precise intention in the accidental gesture, the cowardice under the deceptive mask of conformism and it transforms the glide on the smooth surface of appearances into a sharp descent into the depth of things.

Past and present are connected through the continuity of reflection, through the power of resistance, through the loyalty towards oneself. Ingenious dialogues in a passionate tone reveal – beyond a strong vitality – an acutely vulnerable, lively responsiveness irradiating everything related to the actual course of the world and its problems.

Although the author did not intend it so, his personal diary turned into “literature” instantaneously, the “essay” becoming alterity exactly through the enthusiasm of participation, through the exemplarity of the reactions, and through the authenticity of perception, in this case – as we have stated – essentially ideological. Giving account of the “things one has seen” implies assuming the full responsibility of a free conscience.

Particular existence was metamorphosed into meditation and “text”. No matter how “personal”, this expressed nothing but an inquiry after the sense of actuality, an orientation in the everyday life fictionalized in this way. Despite his intentions, the protagonist became a character after all. He could not evade the “autobiographical pact”. The spirit of Spain entered him with its aridity and grandeur, with its asceticism and full pomposity. Established in an almost abstract space of

dissociations, Adrian Marino – who is in fact a moralist –, praised the Spanish gravity and seriousness, observing adequately: “the Spaniard does not have a symbolist vocation. He does not study the nuances, does not accept half-measures and he always carries his things through.” This assertion – polemicizing subsidiarily with our endemic superficiality and irresponsibility – defines in fact this Romanian intellectual, who was among the firsts who recognized in this country that succeeding and gaining competence and a Romanian personality on a European level, means “fighting, first of all, through yourself and for yourself”. Unlike Julien Green, Adrian Marino could say at any time: he was exactly the man of the journal he wrote.

Julien Benda in *La Trahison des clercs* demanded detachedness and superior wisdom of the intellectual, qualities which should give weight to his words. Assuming his singularity represented for Adrian Marino his ontological condition itself. He acknowledged no “mentor”, and did not consider himself the part of any institutional system. He did not follow a particular direction, though he invented – as we shall see – a tradition for himself. He had his own ideas and wisdom, his favourite books and personalities, his myths. He had the reputation of an uncomfortable personality, though he did many good deeds. His humane side is completely revealed in the “duplex” *Al treilea discurs. Cultură, ideologie și politică în România. Adrian Marino în dialog cu Sorin Antohi*, (The Third Discourse. Culture, Ideology and Politics in Romania. Adrian Marino in Dialogue with Sorin Antohi).

Without being very numerous, books of conversation (the type Alexandru Paleologu – Stelian Tănase, Petru Dumitriu – Eugen Simion, Adrian Severin – Gabriel Andreescu, or Vladimir Tismăneanu – Mircea Mihăieș) essentially belong to the autobiographical discourse, and can be associated with the *trend* imposed in the Romanian literature of the last decade: the trend of confessions. The availability for dialogue in Adrian Marino’s case became an opportunity to interpret the experienced reality, and especially to promote – as a challenge – a set of principles, themes, crucial points, and virtualities belonging to his neo-paşoptist orientation. His interlocutor, Professor Sorin Antohi, the one who had launched the formula “the third discourse”, made this expression into a systematic ideological construction placed under the sign of the alternative. He instinctively resisted the temptation of monopolizing the conversation (how harmful this temptation can be we have seen in the case of the Liiceanu – Cioran “duplex”), accepting the dialogue as an intercessory exercise.

The biography of Adrian Marino [*Autoportret cu societate*, (Self-portrait with Society)] is the history of permanent redefinition, perpetual entrenching in the armour of his work, overwhelming for those who intend to question his bibliographic existence. Directly, colloquially, following plain sincerity, the solitary scholar revealed his intellectual identity marked by appetite for the criticism of ideas – a yet marginal, “exotic” domain, taking into consideration the traditional Romanian preoccupations. Present in the public sphere, after 1989, the literary hermeneutist validated the conscience of civic duty through direct implication into social and political life. Disappointments, disgraceful moments, adversities appeared. This also explains why the strategies of récrimination were resorted to. They became relevant not as much in particular situations (Mr. Alecu, this “Maurice Chevalier of the Romanian essay” suspected to have “just lectures, but not studies”), but more in the general horizon of ideas, which in the spirit of the “third discourse” denotes – “positive detachedness”.

Marino observed and bluntly reported the ambiguities, errors, betrayals and infamies of his age. His experiences (from the *homo captivus* to the *homo viator*) mostly free of the dross of resentments passed over the contingent and retrieved exemplarity. The turns of the dialogue, natural and unavoidable in a debate (resonant but also retaining the beneficial aggressiveness of a case that requires to be communicated) regarding “Romania and the West”, the aspirations of the present day Romanian culture or the relationship between society and politics were supervised by a rigorous, rational authority which imposed coherence in the name of the main idea: “the third discourse”. On the other hand, each chapter is followed by an analytical summary, speaking of its wide-ranging and poignant approaches. Here are some conversational “themes”: “From Thracians to Romanians: the Persistence of Deficiencies”, “Resistance through Culture?”, “A Professional”, “Rejecting the Hierarchies”, “The Marino Archive”, “The Gaol: a Liberal Spirit between the Legionaries and the Communists”, “Can G. Călinescu Be Translated?”, “«Culturally Colonized». Romanian Encyclopaedic Traditions”, “Foreigners’ View about us”, “Professional Relationships with Foreign Researchers around Étiemble”, “The Noica «School» Initiatory Groups. Compromise and Collaboration in Communism”, “Life in Cluj”, “Our Political Class”, “The Myth of Master Manole in a Folkloric Reservation”, etc.

Adrian Marino was irreversibly attracted to the concepts of plurality, tolerance, democracy, never deserting the critical spirit. Rarely

did his way of thinking offer the surprise of subjective evaluations (the "irremediable" regionalism of the society in Cluj, the "modern versions" of the *pașoptist* heroines, the obduracy of invoking undeserved friendships), because the majority of the hypotheses of the projective scenario project were aimed at the categorial, the duration and the efficiency of the transposition into act.

The analysis of the Romania from that time was equivalent to an ideological reading, having as coordinates "the profound bolshevization of the Romanian nation", the mediocrity of our political class, "the national defects", the role of intellectuals and of civil society, the fate of the political prisoner and the negative image of a "culture of publicists and poets". All these were acknowledged to be "obsessions" of the rationalist's existence, who simultaneously pleaded for a Romanian and a European future, for the creative emulation, respectively for a non-epigonical, and firmly edified culture without complexes. To connect your name to great syntheses, to reference works, was the message of Adrian Marino, the critic of ideas to the new generation: "Young publicists, do write articles, but, in the same time, focus also on two-three fundamental problems, which you would like to solve! There are several extremely interesting issues in Romanian culture which deserve your attention. Study the sources, enter the libraries, and do not confine yourselves to the commentary of the latest book published! Unfortunately, newly published books need presentation for reasons of advertising. However, criticism cannot be made only through literary chronicles focusing on the present. Literary criticism does not operate like this in western countries!" The "Manifesto" to the youth has obviously a grave tone, but also a tinge of compliant quixotism, both characteristic to the elaborator of ideas.

The third discourse contained a *neo-pașoptist* ideological message which had as an aim to put an end to Romania's isolation by giving up the servile attitude towards the West as well as the nationalist and protochronistic autochthonism. We have the possibility to build a country due to the fact that – as Catherina Durandin said – "in Romania the 1848 Revolution has not been finished even to this day". Adrian Marino's liberal creed is obvious and it belongs to a larger context. The question of European integration dominated the movement of ideas in these years, and expressed essentially the awareness – as much as there is – of our identity.

Adrian Marino was probably the most suitable person to survey the present through an ideological approach also within the field of political science. He accomplished a construction in which Europeanism

appeared as a highly complex notion, *Revenirea în Europa* (Return to Europe), along with *Pentru Europa* (For Europe) and *Politică și cultură* (Politics and Culture), elaborating a corpus and clearly expressing his ideological program. The author remained the same from one book to the other, steadily maintaining his options and attitudes. Therefore, as these options and attitudes were quite numerous and profound, we can talk about the existence of a consequent creed.

Revenirea în Europa (Return to Europe) proposed a structural ideological outlook upon a set of European political ideas characteristic to the Romania of the 1990–1995's in its most pregnant aspects. These were sometimes exaggerated and full of controversies, but they always maintained their actuality, due to their enormous importance. Anthologizing the texts of the over eighty authors who expressed their opinion in the European question, Adrian Marino set up a genuine debate in the five sections of the book ("What is Europe?", "Romania and the European Integration", "Romania Between East and West", "Pros and Cons for the European Idea", "Romanian Actions for Europe") the protagonist of which turned out to be Romania instead of Europe. For the emergency of the Euro-Atlantic integration was, indeed, an absolute priority. Obviously, in about fifty years, one can read the pages of this volume as an ideological novel and be seduced by the ingenuity of "direction", by the acuity of "editing", which did their utmost to maintain permanently the tension of ideas. Everything became literature and Adrian Marino knew this the best. However, today the actions must be viewed in their immediate context.

Unavoidably, the selected texts, opinions are unequal in quality. Besides important names, occasional or totally obscure publicists appear as well. In their texts rigorous analysis was substituted for slogans and emotional attitudes. Nevertheless, the book as a whole remains all the more significant, being the document of Romanian public opinion, of the reactions to the European idea.

Romania's status is controversial, polemically argued, and the pros and cons were balanced by the author of the book who remained objective, listening to each party. This fact does not mean that his position is eluded or ambiguous. On the contrary, it is firmly asserted: "Though I declared myself openly – and a long time ago – a convinced and resolute partisan of Romania's European integration on every level, I am not hindered by this to see at the same time, with widely open eyes the surrounding reality: the difficulties of our country's European

integration are especially high.”¹ This is an invitation to a professional, systematic, radical analysis – basically an invitation to normality. It is a superior ideological measure that reveals the morality of the thinker, a model for any authentic intellectual situated in a fluid and still equivocal political milieu. The critic of ideas was aware of the risk he took, but, at the same time, he was also aware of the therapeutic value of the harsh lucidity able to produce fundamental changes. The return to Europe means the reaffirmation of a usurped belonging (“irrevocably Romanian-Europeans with a double spiritual-cultural inheritance and identity) and the (economical, political, social, cultural) reintegration of our country into the European system of institutions and values.

We should not forget an extremely important fact: Adrian Marino is not a politician, but a political scientist, a thinker, a theoretician. The issues of Romania, liberty, democracy, liberalism are the parts of a vast research program.²

Censorship is a subject belonging to this program and it does not comply with any superficial or comfortable game of the historical or morphological dimensions. On the contrary, having flirted with the dogmatic pedantries, bureaucratically increasing very quickly, virulent, exclusivist and institutionalized by equivalent gestures, censorship sacrifices to its greed new and new victims by sealing a tenebrous pact with the religious or worldly power. Instead of guarding the purity of ideas, it watches with perverse mystic fervour over the stability of an inclement tyrannical authority, which feels the threat of mutinous thinking – emblem of a fantasizing and humble liberty.

This was the milieu of Adrian Marino’s new project of idea criticism, prefigured by the volume *Cenzura în România. Schiță istorică introductivă*, (Censorship in Romania. Introductory Historical Sketch). This “colonist”, who – as it was brilliantly said by Monica Spiridon – cultivated, enclosed and parcelled out the austere and arid field of ideas on his own, forcing it to bear fruits, was trying to rediscover the ways of the “freedom of thought and expression”, which had been continuously repressed by the more or less totalitarian prohibitions, deforesting, through the luxurious branches of some inextricable theoretical implications, the autochthon tradition of a long resistance to oppression. The “Introduction”, claiming the importance of the undertaking, fixes the

¹ Adrian Marino, *Revenirea în Europa*, Craiova, Aius, 1996, p. 195.

² See Cristian Preda, „Contra – cultura neopașoptistă” (“Contra – Neo-pășoptist culture”), in: 22, no. 16, 2001, p. 13.

coordinates of the future ideological edifice, undoubtedly ambitious, integrative and polemic.

The historical projection of the forms of censorship operating in the Romanian space highlights on the one hand the essential similarities with the “captive thought” in Europe, and on the other hand, the specific particularities.

The “beginnings” of censorship were related to religion in our country. Twenty years after the establishment in the Catholic countries of the famous *Index librorum prohibitorum*, it was applied in Transylvania as well – the “heretic” books being strictly controlled in the case of the Jesuit College from Cluj (1579). The orthodox version of censorship was based on a Slavonic index translated around the middle of the 17th century under a more than significant title, *Cărțile cele mincinoase, pe care nu se cade a le ținea și a le citi drept credincioșii Hristiani* (The untruthful books, that are not befitting to be kept and to be read by true Christians). Its aim was to fight against the Catholic and Protestant proselytism.

The first list of banned publications to be made up on Romanian territory was elaborated in the 18th century in Transylvania (thus the Baththyanum Library from Alba Iulia was purged). The Romanian “samizdat”, considered to be “extremely dangerous” by the Habsburg authorities as it propagated the ideas of the French Revolution, appeared also in this century. In an age when the restrictive mentality is getting harsher, in Moldova and in Walachia the climate of illuminated absolutism had a favourable impact as the monopoly of clerical censorship was abolished; though this did not mean the liberalization of book trade. However, didactical materials were free to publish.

The restrictive nature always represents the nucleus of the various particular historical configurations that censorship takes on. “The 19th century – the author remarked – is in all respects decisive for the theory and practice of censorship in the Romanian countries, for the grandeur and decadence of these repressive forms of European importance and actuality.”¹

It is worth mentioning that in Transylvania the spirit of organization and control had methods of extreme intolerance and harshness. Adrian Marino recorded some paradigmatic cases for the “law of progressive aggravation from the centre to periphery”. Censors

¹ Adrian Marino, *Cenzura în România* (Censorship in Romania), Craiova, Aius, 2000, p. 25.

revealed an excess of zeal towards Gheorghe Șincai or Petru Maior. The latter was put into the ambiguous situation of “censored – censor” and was compelled to obey the servitude of an unenviable profession.

The institution of censorship underwent radical changes and oscillating dynamics in the Romanian countries, where under the Russian occupation and with the introduction of the *Organic Regulations* (1831–1832) censorship turned into a “natural” instrument of political power. As an analyst, Adrian Marino enumerated the characteristic traits of an intransigent, police-like system of supervision: bureaucracy and centralization, “vigilance”, the use of some procedures which would make a career (elimination and modification of titles, words, entire passages, banning of entire books, drawing up “black lists”, the appearance of “informers”, withdrawing from “circulation”). As it appears, this was an arsenal of means and a repressive language, which were generally present after 23 August 1944. Other important moments in the evolution of censorship were the Revolutions of 1848 and the union of Moldova and Walachia in 1859. A “press law” appeared, and simultaneously the first press trials in the Principalities were started. (C. D. Aricescu, B. P. Hasdeu, Al. Macedonski, G. Panu etc.). Freedom of expression was considered to be a right, and in 1884 I. C. Brătianu declared press to be the “fourth power in the state”.

The 20th century was characterized by absurd incongruities as regards the expression of the idea of freedom. Censorship would become the regime of shameful, occasionally criminal inequities, induced by wars and dictatorships. One can reflect upon the first trial of “collaborationism” (1919) Ioan Slavici, A. de Herz, Dem Teodorescu and Tudor Arghezi being accused; or upon the scandals provoked when writers such as Geo Bogza, Felix Aderca, H. Bonciu or Mircea Eliade were accused for writing obscene, “pornographic” texts (in Eliade’s case the novel *Domnișoara Christina* [Miss Cristina] being labelled as such!). In such cases the political connotations are obvious.

A separate chapter evokes the new structures of *totalitarian censorship* in two equally noxious forms: fascist-Antonescian and communist. The methods of communist censorship – inspired by the soviet model – improved in accordance with the ideological imperatives of the epoch and as the policy of the unique party changed. Adrian Marino described the Romanian writers’ *special* attitudes to censorship, outlining eight typical situations in gradual order, from the “deletion” of a passage, a chapter, a poem from a volume, to the loss of the right to signature or the total and final ban of some authors.

The theoretician could not overlook the works which reflect upon and classify censorship as a historical manifestation, successively actualizing the stricter and stricter criteria and norms of repression. In this sense the typology proposed by Matei Călinescu was appreciated. This typology is speculatively built on three levels: pre-censorship ("which includes the totality of pressures on an author, its most important aspect being *self-censorship*"), censorship ("official, repressive, censorship in the traditional sense of the word") and post-censorship ("the unhappy conscience of the «approved» author, who blames himself").

In this pioneering work following the destiny of the Book in conditions of ideological, political and – in our days – economical aggression, there is no room for details. The alert narration, the "dry, informative, summarizing" style are able to configure a hardly studied phenomenon. We have yet to speak about the chapter dealing with the insidious forms of censorship in the period following the Revolution of 1989, which is essential, as tension of experience, to the future construction attempting to demonstrate the "historic tradition of the idea of liberty" in the Romanian culture as a form of opposition to the "initializing, *guru*, «Upanishad»"-type teachings, and, in general, to any dogmatic-traditionalistic exaggeration.

Though tempted by the confrontation with the act of deconstructing a theoretical model, in our opinion the "oriented" search of the amplitude of a comparative-integrative knowledge about culture can be much more advantageous; without this it is impossible to understand the Romanian cultural personality. Because, we must admit, Adrian Marino remains the great critic of ideas creating a new hermeneutical system based on the comprehension of literature as a critical history of literary ideas, essentially convergent with the preoccupations to place the Romanian literature within European and universal coordinates. His intention rests on an extremely original synthesis of structural, hermeneutic and model theory (Peter Wunderli) elements.

"Elements" of a hermeneutic thinking (interpretative event and exigency of "comprehension") characterize the author of the *Dictionarul de idei literare* (Dictionary of Literary Ideas), both in the period of critical re-evaluations when he re-read the *Opera lui Alexandru Macedonski* (The Work of Alexandru Macedonski), and in the prestigious comparativist syntheses *Littérature roumaine. Littératures occidentales. Rencontres, Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant* and *Comparatisme et théorie de la littérature*. The latter, written in French, published in 1988

by the "Presses Universitaires de France" and translated into Romanian ten years later¹ continued the attempt to renew the comparativist science launched in *Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, proposing as a substitute for traditional positivism – evidently in crisis – a genuine theoretical orientation, destined to ensure real autonomy for the discipline in conformity with the idea of the universality of literature. The change of perspective was thought "from within" and it belonged to a "reformist" action that had protagonists such as René Étiemble, René Wellek, or more recently Haskell M. Block, Guy Lafleche and others. The centre of Marino's theory was the concept of the *invariant*: "The *invariant* imposes the definition and illustration of the permanent, of the essential and through this of the universality of literature. It is the key-element of theoretic comparatism", concluded the author.²

Thus, through the establishment of *comparativist poetics*, comparative literature was separated from the sphere of canonized literary criticism and history. It became an independent field of study, with a precise object and a specific method.

Adrian Marino tried to prevent the inherent misunderstandings, confusions, complexes, objections and criticisms provoked by this undertaking, uncomfortable for the conformist, dogmatic, frivolous spirits. The bibliographic apparatus – we shall talk about it below – impressive through its dimensions and comprehensiveness exceeds the usual extent of a system of references, of a single "file" of problems being rather the "documentary infrastructure" of the hermeneutic approach in this veritable organon for the use of comparatists. We must underline the use of the mechanisms of the *preconception*, and of the adequate reading techniques. For the "comparative method" claimed by the "new paradigm", can operate effectively only if it adopts a hermeneutical epistemology. If the definition of comparative literature and poetics is based on the existence of universal literature consisting of each nation's literature, small and large, (the Goethean *Weltliteratur*), which is identical with literature itself – as Marino claimed –, then the deciphering of general significations presupposes "simultaneous reading", the inductive-deductive examination of the literary field, the analysis of facts indispensably being followed by a final synthesis. Besides, a comparative study requires: that the texts should be analyzed depending on the correlation between part and whole; a typological

¹ Adrian Marino, *Comparatism și teoria literaturii*, Iași, Polirom, 1998.

² *Ibid.* p. 66.

approach; the valorisation of the model; that the indications of analogy and similarity, as well as the re-actualized method of parallels and comparison should be used; a phenomenological description; and finally the "crucible" of verification, all the more efficient, as the coherence and clarity of the scheme and of the hermeneutical "circuits" are more obvious. The focal point of the work is a possible definition of comparative literariness. On theoretical level the problem of literariness (the "aporia" of literariness) is formulated in the following way: "Let us admit that the ensemble of national literatures, in other words, universal literature forms a single world literature, which is in fact mistaken for literature. Thus literature becomes a total, general and structurally uniform reality, being the spatial and temporal dimension of *literariness*. It forms a «system», whose «model» shall become the model of literariness.¹

Expressing the very same *neo-paşoptist* program, this book, a true rarity in our culture in lack of a significant tradition of literary theory, ends with a *credo*: "A literary «universality» specifically localized in time and space and formulated with all the possible «personality». This is and remains our essential objective."

Adrian Marino's hermeneutics, beside the *Dictionary* and his works of comparative literature is configured in *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade* (Mircea Eliade's Hermeneutics) (the reconstruction of an empirical model), *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* (The Hermeneutics of the Idea of Literature) and *Biografia ideii de literatură* (The Biography of the Idea of Literature). This works approach polemically the modern hermeneutical formulations, namely Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode*, Paul Ricoeur's *Le conflit des interprétations*, or Emilio Betti's *Teoria generale della interpretazione*. Certainly, the number of references is enormous; in Adrian Marino's case the ritual of erudition is fascinating; the critical references being more than a simple "base", they are an essential section of the argumentation.

Marino's "idea books" must be connected with the wish to liberate criticism from the tutelage of positivism and impressionism, and to make it into a relevant discipline including both "exegesis" and its historical integration into comprehension itself (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). More simply, the historical life of the idea of literature (*The Biography*) consists of its textual development in different languages and cultural contexts. It offers the historic documentary raw material which can be

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

verified. *The Hermeneutics* had the role to interpret this material, to observe the recurrences, to arrange them into "models". *The Biography* offered a domain of observation; *The Hermeneutics* detects a sense, an interior "logic".

Adrian Marino was in quest of his family of affinities and correspondences (with the confessed intention of integration) *establishing* a Romanian hermeneutical tradition. It was an act of retrieval, which implied access into the areas of primordial depths, into the world of hierophanies, in order to decrypt "meanings" and "significations" through the precursors' capacity of metaphoric, symbolic or cosmogonic thinking. The "invention" of a hermeneutic tradition was based on autochthonous initiatives, such as: *Trilogia cunoașterii* (The Trilogy of Knowledge) by Lucian Blaga, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* (The Romanian Dimension of Existence) by Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nostalgia paradisului* (The Nostalgia of Paradise) by Nichifor Crainic, *Devenirea întru ființă* (Becoming in-to Being) Constantin Noica, and the Mircea Eliade's works, "initiatory" sources for any elaboration of an interpretative structure.

Before turning into a system of incorruptible geometries, Marino's hermeneutics was *par excellence* creative due to its openness.

The "system" permanently formulated and reformulated itself in a process of superior adjustment of thinking to "behaviour" and practical experience. The ontological represented a perpetual "initial point", the starting point of an undertaking that affected the whole life of literature and required the "being" of the idea on multiple levels, aspiring towards the same objective: the accomplishment of a model.

The six volumes of *The Biography of the Idea of Literature*, a really encyclopaedic work, are developed on two axes: one which accumulates and systematizes the conceptual formation through definitions of literature having a biographic character, and another etymologically oriented, having as an aim to clarify the invariants of the same idea. In the dispute of the "quasi-metaphysic essentialists" with the "pragmatic functionalists", Marino proposed the nominalistic solution based on the textual reality of the notions defining literature.

The "ages" of the idea of literature are submitted to a spectral analysis beginning with Antiquity, a globalizing and universalistic period, followed by the Middle Ages and Renaissance, when the polarity of *sacred/profane* determined the use of some more and more differentiated acceptations of literature, then the Baroque, the Enlightenment (the ideologization of literature took place), the 19th century, a century of

rupture, in which the “meanings of the idea of literature become divergent and the differences explosive”, and finally, the 20th century being marked hereditarily by the crisis of the idea of literature.

The apparently arid space of definitions seems to be endangered – after the routes of literary ideology have been walked over – by the temptation of easily symmetrical oppositions and of comfortable dichotomies. This, however, is out of the question. The suspected – premature and conspiratorial – relaxations are disproved by the polemic, implacable, lively pulse of the construction. Let us dwell on the discussion referring to the concepts of national literature and universal literature, being in a particular tension due to the complexity of the ideological, politic, social and cultural context characterizing the 20th century. If the evidence that national identity is given in the first place by linguistic identity is generally accepted, difficulties arise as regards the theoretical reflection due to the ambiguities generated by a dynamic reality, tributary to political interferences (exacerbation of nationalism). Therefore, some traditional concepts must be radically reformulated, “the «national» soliloquy tending more and more to be replaced by the «international» dialogue”. The appearance of a new type of writers, who assumed a double identity – national and supranational –, illustrates the most important changes in the 20th century literary consciousness. The author convincingly demonstrates that one can simultaneously be “Romanian”, “European”, and “universal”.

The analysis of the present time literary phenomenon outlines – among other aspects – two representative situations: the substitution of Euro-centrism for polycentrism (“polysystem theory”) and the questioning of institutionalized canons.

Adrian Marino made another assertion that sounded like heresy: just like the concepts national and international literature, the idea of popular literature had an important, spectacular evolution. It evolved from the traditional “folkloric” meaning to acceptations defined through the ideas of mass literature, subliterate and paraliterature. With these we enter again a virgin field, since there are no anterior Romanian references that are worth remembering.

Referring to literature, society and ideology, the critic of ideas explained the appearance of mass literature, a new concept “historically dated, product of the generalization of the 20th century mass society.” Its essential characteristics would be: the amount of literary production, its great success and wide-ranging audience. The value of a book is equivalent with its spreading and advertising (Robert Escarpit). People

talk more and more about the “industry of literature”, “market”, “business”. Literature is a specific commercial product, and the book becomes “merchandise”. Submitted to standardization and exploited in the media, mass literature has become a diabolical ideological and propagandistic instrument “praised as a form of manipulation of great «revolutionary» effectiveness on the one hand, and criticized as an instrument of alienating the masses on the other hand.”¹ The development of mass culture and the increasing role of media probably mark, with all their incalculable consequences, “the most profound «cultural revolution» of the 20th century.”

The idea of literary value being in crisis official concepts have been repudiated and substituted with negative notions. Thus we face the formation of a new reality dominated by subliterature, paraliterature, antiliterature; a phenomenon which, accepted *volens nolens*, presupposes that “inferior” literary genres are rehabilitated, hierarchies become relative, and the literary art receives a new status.

The first and only literary encyclopaedia in our culture is finished with a big question mark generated by the statement according to which as we cannot talk about the entropy of literature, “one can talk about non-literature, anti-literature too only in purely theoretical, speculative, hypothetical terms which cannot be verified in the immediate, current reality of literature”.²

¹ Adrian Marino, *Biografia ideii de literatură*, vol. V, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1998, p. 143.

² Adrian Marino, *Biografia ideii de literatură*, vol. VI, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 2000, p. 218.