

Adrian Marino between *unit-ideas* and *Zeitgeist*

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Historian of ideas and liberal thinker, interested in the study of ideologies (fascination often manifested after the fall of communism), Adrian Marino claimed public attention in less than a year after his death with a vast work, which though unfinished, deals not only with censorship in Romania, but also with the theme of liberty.² The two terms fascinated the author in the last period of his life. He conjoined them in an antithetic pair with the very purpose of accentuating the pluses and minuses of Romanian culture and society analyzed in a studious and exhaustive *racourci* with application to the 18th and 19th centuries.

Adrian Marino elegantly handled the lancet on the pre-modern Romanian political thinking and culture, being fascinated by the evolution of a critical spirit. Therefore, as a scrupulous analyst, he did not explore merely the visible idea-structures connected to the mentioned subjects, but he also looked into the less-known, marginal areas. Preoccupied with the slow process of Europeanization of Romanian culture, Adrian Marino particularly focused on the concept of modernity applied in the sphere of political thinking. Is there a Romanian tradition in this sense? Was our liberal thinking only an epigone? Returning to the sources, to the origins, Adrian Marino engaged himself in the Sisyphean labour of gathering documentary evidence, for he wished to respect the historical truth faithfully.

The author recognized the militant character of his procedure, which even had missionary accents "defending and affirming the liberty of conscience, thinking and expression". As a synonym for censorship, he also liked to use the term *constraint*, considered sometimes more adequate for its evident noxious meaning. Death prevented Adrian Marino from writing the final chapter of his work, namely, "Confruntarea dintre liberalism și totalitarismele de dreapta și stânga" (The confrontation between liberalism and leftist and rightist totalitarian regimes). This would have been an imperious chapter for professionally

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² *Adrian Marino, Libertate și cenzură în România* (Liberty and Censorship in Romania), Iași, Polirom, 2005, 299.

separating the conceptual waters (and not only) in the ideological confusions that haunted Romania after the fall of the communist regime.

Naturally, the author defined his method at the beginning of his book: he was a representative of the history of ideas, discipline having no Romanian model. The history of ideas was seen as the only appropriate method throughout centuries for analyzing Romanian culture and ideology. Adrian Marino admitted that he partially accepted the American version of that method through the "*unit-ideas*" term relying on the analysis of a theory, a doctrine, a program etc. Through the term „unit-ideas”, the relations – beyond time or space – between different political ideas can be detected. In spite of the multiple nuances which may occur in such cases that which the author called “ideological, mental construction“, remains a constant of the analysis. The ideological invariants which essentially take part at the portrayal of a culture and of a political thinking are interesting too. The long-term changes often depend on these invariants.

Adrian Marino did not rely on a quantitative method of the history of ideas, but on a qualitative one. And, at this point, the author displayed the revelation he had had during his documentation: the acknowledged cultural or literary hierarchies will undergo some major changes; works catalogued as minor are to become important strictly through the medium of the history of ideas. Adrian Marino even talks about a certain voluptuousness in the rediscovery of some unjustly ignored writers from before 1848. For this rediscovery, the author used various sources: memoirs, correspondences, official reports of the age, etc. His revelation was embodied – among others – in “*Noul Geist al Școlii Ardelene*” (the New *Geist* of the Transylvanian School), which had surpassed in relevance, in the sense of the *unit-ideas*, the traditional cultural practice of the age. Basically, Adrian Marino’s counterattack was directed against the primacy of the aesthetic, his analysis proving that the political idea had been prior to the literary idea in the pre-modern Romanian culture, and that the latter was dominant in the Romanian space only from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. By means of such an investigation the author solved an obsessing Romanian cultural complex: containing undeniable ideological, political, social values, Romanian culture had initially been an advanced and not at all minor culture. Adrian Marino voluptuously rehabilitated it and offered us an unprecedented explicative solution that satisfies the national pride.

As regards the title of the book, it must be specified that the author was more concerned and fascinated with the idea of freedom than with the issue of censorship. Adrian Marino considered the idea of freedom "the first Romanian principle of thought" but understood in the definition of stating and claiming the liberty of will. The impulse of liberty is a "fundamental human" impetus; that is why liberty was not initially theorized in Romanian culture. An ideological *pro domo* defence for liberty is needed only in the moment when constraint appears. Transylvania was the first Romanian territory where the idea of liberty began to be discussed on a professional level, having an ideological background. However, the discussion remained inside the cultured class and did not break into the profound Romania of the masses. The idea of liberty had different nuances in Transylvania than in the other Romanian Countries – but this fact is natural and utterly justified. Notwithstanding, Adrian Marino's central observation was other: namely that the idea of freedom – as it appeared in Transylvania – was thoroughly contemporaneous with the European flux of ideas; if nothing, this point showed that in the 18th century we were at the same cultural level as Europe and we were integrated in her. Only Europe did not know about us!

That is why a chronology of the idea of freedom is necessary; we are informed accordingly that in 1799 Paul Iorgovici, was the first to express clearly this idea, followed soon by Samuil Micu and by the other members of the Transylvanian School. Marino's analysis was made step by step, entering into details, in order to offer a general view on the *Zeitgeist* of the age. The majority of interventions related to the idea of liberty appear in theological or linguistic debates, then in historical and social-political discussions. However, the idea of freedom was decisively interlinked in Transylvania with the aspiration towards religious freedom, and only after that with political-social liberty (the national idea) and the freedom of press. *Supplex Libellus Valachourum* was mainly the quintessence of the first two issues. The European idea or ideas flow into Walachia and Moldova through Transylvania – asserted Adrian Marino. Transylvania was the first Romanian province that assimilated the European model and discovered Europe through the flux of ideas. The journeys made by Romanian scholars to Vienna and Rome (more rarely to France or England) were essential in this respect.

Moldova and Walachia were also discussed in equally detailed case studies, but Transylvania remained – at least for the 18th and for the beginning of the 19th century – the champion in Europeanizing the

Romanian area, and in introducing the ideas circulating throughout Europe. The other two Romanian countries seem to have promoted the idea of liberty less impetuously, at least in the period studied by the author. The progress was individual in Moldova and Walachia and not collective (as in Transylvania), and the influences being brought by Phanariotes or they came from Russian, and not from the West. Nevertheless, the critical spirit developed and the modernization process took place progressively and favourably in Moldova and Walachia, both being more patriarchal-traditional countries than Transylvania. There were several peculiarities in both regions: in Moldova freemasonry implanted a current of western-liberal ideas; the lack of censorship and the massive book-import approved by the foreign cosmopolite rulers were important too; and last but not least the influences and especially the echoes of the French Revolution were essential. In Moldova's case, Adrian Marino also followed the "beginnings of the Romanian «historical» complexes of inferiority and superiority". "We are indeed inferior Europeans, but we also have a great capacity of recovery" – asserted the author optimistically.

The case of Walachia was almost similar to that of Moldova; however, the author observed here a more intensive process of Europeanization than in Moldova, even if there was the a danger of creating some "forms without essence": Europe was mythicized, but it did not have a clear content that could have been taken over and assumed by the intellectuals of Walachia. Europe was blank (as an adoptable essence) but imitable. Adrian Marino's discussion is challenging as it was aimed inclusively at the debates on the same obsessing theme, which have taken place since 1990, after the fall of communism and the more or less forced joining of Romania with Europe. Up to this point we discussed the 18th century. Another impressive model was dedicated to the 19th century in Transylvania, a real obsession of the author, I would say, to fix the origins of the Europeanization process of Romanian culture in Transylvania, and not in the South. The procedure was without *partipris*, however, it was deeply scientific, like the entire book, which makes Adrian Marino – if this is still necessary – the most prolific historian and bibliographer of ideas in Romania.