

The Issue of the European Integration of Romanian Literature in A. Marino's Works

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“In fact, Romanian literature has never entirely left the European space.”

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UNDER THE recent circumstances of Europe's cultural integration, a process involving intense trans-national dialogue, every European culture is nowadays going through a process of redefining identities and re-evaluating traditions. Yet the problem of modernization, interpreted as synchronization with the Western values and trends, is not a recent one at all, being constantly employed by Romanian literary criticism and theory. Since the mid-19th century, along with Romanticism, Romanian culture has decisively turned towards Western Europe, where it found the inspiration for new development.

My paper considers the issue of the European integration of Romanian literature.

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ature as it was approached by a well-known contemporary critic of ideas, Adrian Marino (1921–2005). I shall mainly discuss two of his books: *Prezențe românești și realități europene: Jurnal intelectual* (1978; 2nd edition 2004) and *Pentru Europa: Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale* (1995; 2nd edition 2005). The objectives of this paper are to briefly outline the history of the concept of European integration, from Marino's perspective, and to investigate the means by which this integration took place at different times (cultural import as such, adaptation, influence, coincidence/affinity, etc.).

A complex personality of Romanian culture in the second half of the 20th century, Adrian Marino was active in several research fields and even established a few of them in Romania. He made himself known into the literary world in the forties, while he was publishing in the journals *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, *Lumea* or *Națiunea*, as a member of the circle led by the interwar literary critic G. Călinescu, whose assistant he was at the time. He then left the domain of literary criticism (the impressionistic type that had been dominant in Romanian literary culture for many decades) in favor of a more systematic and theoretically-oriented approach to literature. In this vein he published *Introducere în critica literară* (Introduction to literary criticism) in 1968; then, several volumes of comparative literature studies (*Étiemble ou le comparatisme militant*, 1982; *Comparatisme et théorie de la littérature*, 1988); he initiated a theoretically as well as a historically oriented study of literature with *Critica ideilor literare* (Critique of literary ideas, 1974), *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* (Hermeneutics of the idea of literature, 1987), and the impressive *Biografia ideii de literatură* (Biography of the idea of literature) that came out in six volumes (1991–2000). His works are inspiring for their scholarship and capacity to master a huge amount of information, without being excessively technical, or employing a strict methodology, for that matter (beside the habitual techniques of scientific research).

Yet Adrian Marino's intellectual biography did not evolve solely on the coordinates of literary studies or encyclopedic endeavors (an example of the latter type that we should mention here would be, along with the already cited *Biography*, his *Dicționar de idei literare*/Dictionary of literary ideas, vol. 1, entries A–G, published in 1973, again a pioneering work in Romanian culture). We discover in his bibliography two other types of publications that are seemingly different from those listed above from the point of view of their thematic interests. I am talking about a series of books on political and cultural ideology that were published after 1990, books that mainly tackle the issues of Romania's identity and European integration, in a manner that could be qualified as essayistic and militant at the same time: *Evadări în lumea liberă* (Escaping into the free world, 1993); *Pentru Europa: Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale* (Apology for Europe: The integration of Romania: Ideological and cultural issues,

1995); *Politică și cultură: Pentru o nouă cultură română* (Politics and culture: A manifesto for a new Romanian culture, 1996); *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: Conversations with Sorin Antohi, 2001), and a few others. I should refer also to a series of (intellectual) travel diaries, as he insists on calling them, which form a genre practiced by Marino especially during the communist period: *Olé! España* (1974), *Carnete europene* (European notebooks, 1976), *Prezențe românești și realități europene: Jurnal intelectual* (Romanian presences and European realities: An intellectual diary, 1978). While we can set apart a certain period in his intellectual career from 1990 on, it is impossible to establish similarly firm categories for the preceding one—roughly from 1968 till 1989—when his theoretical books coexisted with others rendered more... frivolous by their specific devices, such as the travel diaries. Nevertheless, these were reprinted recently, a sign that their author still believed in them; moreover, they were perceived as relevant and interesting by his editors and his readers as well. These travel diaries stand out by two features that relate them to his books published after 1989: a) they are oriented rather toward the interior self of the traveler than toward the places he was visiting (a fact that holds true for any travel diary which goes beyond the shallow tourist's interests); b) their dominant theme is the European impact of Romanian culture and the latter's capacity to be part of a larger ideological space.

Even at a first glance the reader of these diaries notices that the author makes a connection between his personal concerns and the major subjects of the culture which he represents. Marino experiences the theme (and also the problem) of our European integration as a personal issue of foremost importance. His book *Prezențe românești și realități europene: Jurnal intelectual* (1978) primarily focuses on the presence of a Romanian intellectual called Adrian Marino in various Western cultural spaces—Portugal, Denmark, England, France. The title's objectivity, which suggests a volume of comparative studies, is countered by the form of the subtitle (*Jurnal intelectual*/Intellectual diary) and by the extended *Mică (!) autobiografie spirituală* (Short (!) spiritual autobiography) that opens the travel accounts. The traveler cannot be pleased simply with writing out his new experiences and feelings, which are often quite spectacular, stirred by the places where he travels after overcoming serious difficulties; he relates these experiences to an existential program of the Enlightened kind and to a militant attitude towards the circulation of Romanian culture and its genuine participation in the European intercultural dialogue. This constant involvement into his national culture's issues definitely calls to mind the type of experience that Dinicu Golescu had gone through and written about almost two centuries ago. Marino frequently speaks about the Romanian intellectual's 'complex' in his/her

confrontation with Europe (a complex named after the Enlightened nobleman who wrote *Însemnare a călătorii mele*/Accounts of my journeys, 1826); yet it is not certain that the critic himself managed to overcome this reaction, despite his remarkable efforts.

I THINK THAT a discussion on the moments of genuine European integration of Romanian culture—mainly through its literature and literary studies, which are Marino’s first concern—should start by an analysis of the conditions to be satisfied in order for the Romanian authors/literary works/ideas to be of European relevance. The critic had been preoccupied with this question in his previous books as well; his motto might have been a phrase that he often repeated: “Without any complexes, inhibitions, or mechanical adaptations” (*Introducere în critica literară*, 495). His ideal was to experience and promote the Romanian literary heritage as conveying an inherently European dimension. On a personal level, he expresses this type of osmotic relationship in the following words: “I consider myself to be Romanian and at the same time European, closely connected to the history, culture, and destiny of my country which is integrated historically and culturally into a geopolitical and spiritual assembly called Europe” (*Prezențe românești*, 28). The opposition between the provincial and the universal modes of conduct needs to be overcome; thus it constitutes the object of Marino’s ‘deconstructive’ approach (see pp. 30–35). Some of the ‘rules,’ so to speak, that are involved in preparing the ground for a European recognition of Romanian literature could be: creation has to prevail over the imitation of Western values (a theme very much debated by the supporters of Romanian Romanticism); the works have to be of real value (“No one could become a name abroad if he hadn’t previously made himself acknowledged in his home country,” p. 49); deep concern with international recognition. This last condition does not go without saying, as some people might think; Marino considers the cases of several writers, literary critics, or theorists that have enjoyed a remarkable influence on a national level, but an insignificant one on the European market of ideas, precisely because of their lack of interest in the circulation of their works (in this case, the exchange value is much more important than the inherent literary value; see the argument in *Pentru Europa*, 2nd edition, p. 39).

The paths that might lead to greater recognition and acceptance of national values entail various cultural strategies; anyway, these could be pursued simultaneously. One solution would be to try to support Romanian culture by means of developing scientific tools such as dictionaries, histories, syntheses, which should be objective and rigorously structured: “In case the Romanian critical spirit aspires to universal relevance, it acutely needs schemata and syntheses, ‘panoramas’ and ‘histories,’ ‘general’ introductions, not collections of fragments,

details, or dissimilar elements” (p. 43). Here we come across one of the arguments that Marino usually employs against the impressionistic criticism which had been dominant in the Romanian literary field for too long. Theoretical and synthetically-oriented studies possess greater chances of persuasion than subjective or essayistic approaches that lack precise criteria of valuation.

Another means of promoting Romanian literature in Europe requires adjustment to the necessities of the market that is to be conquered. Marino sketches the elements of a valid strategy of cultural marketing. These are: a) offering the Western public and editors the texts that really interest them (not poetry, which has long been overrated, but texts and studies about the Romanian literary avant-garde, literature on ethical, critical, social themes of current impact, science-fiction novels, a.s.o.); b) discovering the editors interested in supporting Romanian literature; c) working with native speakers for translations, etc. Let us notice here that precisely these suggestions have been implemented by the Romanian Cultural Institute over the past years in its programs for translations and publications of Romanian authors, either in partnership with foreign publishing houses or by itself.

On a theoretical level, this problem was discussed in Romanian culture in the terms of an antagonistic relationship between synchronization and originality/national traditions. Opting for the latter sometimes led to an ideology called protochronism, which Marino firmly rejected. He approached also the phenomenon of panchronism, previously studied in his *Critica ideilor literare* (1974). It is remarkable that Adrian Marino, who believed in the necessity of synchronization of Romanian culture with European values, did not refer more frequently to the ideas of the interwar literary critic E. Lovinescu on this matter. Probably Marino distanced himself from Lovinescu’s work as a result of his being a disciple of G. Călinescu’s, or because he didn’t attach value to impressionistic criticism. On the other hand, Marino often regretted Lovinescu’s lack of interest in a larger circulation of his ideas and works. More efficient in this direction were several personalities of Romanian postwar literary theory and comparative studies, whom Marino mentions with friendly admiration and the feeling of a common purpose in *Prezențe românești* (Al. Duțu is the most prominent name here). Chances of circulation and impact on a European scale possess also cultural institutions such as the academic journals published in foreign languages. In this respect we can cite *Cahiers roumains d’études littéraires* (edited by Marino himself), together with *Synthesis*, the *International Journal of Romanian Studies* (edited by Sorin Alexandrescu in Amsterdam) and others.

The critic is not at all an unconditional militant for the adoption of Western models. There are several passages in his books that bear witness to his critical stance in this respect. During his stay in Paris depicted in *Prezențe românești*,

Marino experiences moments of despair caused by his personal situation and also by some French intellectuals' lack of enthusiasm in appreciating Romanian scientific contributions in the field of literary studies. As a defensive strategy Marino interprets situations like that as symptoms of the crisis that Western culture has been going through; at the same time he makes a distinction between French culture (in relation to which he admits a certain delay of Romanian culture) and the British or German areas, which in his opinion are more open to foreign encounters from a methodological or thematic point of view.

His volume *Pentru Europa: Integrarea României: Aspecte ideologice și culturale* (1995; 2nd edition 2005), though written more recently, displays the same concerns that formed the substance of Marino's travel diaries. This might be an argument in favor of the present relevance of his theories. In this book—a collection of articles the coherence of which is due to the issue of the 'European idea' and its Romanian reception—the critic of literary ideas enthusiastically outlines a policy of Romanian culture. The future core of such a policy or cultural strategy is nurtured by the Romanian cultural traditions of European orientation. Marino takes up any gesture in the cultural field that might serve as a proof of that orientation—for instance, the journal *Ideea europeană* (The European Idea), edited by C. Rădulescu-Motru between 1919 and 1928.

The encounter between Romanian literature and Europe is not and has never been unproblematic. Marino analyses the myth of Europe as set up in Romanian culture by charting the meaning of the concepts of 'Europe' and 'European.' He notices that the history of Romanian cultural relations with Europe has known two extreme attitudes (both to be avoided): the refusal of otherness, one's confinement local traditions and, on the other hand, a fascination devoid of critical spirit. Still how is it possible for an authentic cultural dialogue to occur in these circumstances? Marino's opinion is that we should start by an acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of Europe that manages to accommodate very different ideas and tendencies: from the Greek and Latin grounds to the Christian heritage, then all the way through to cultural movements such as humanism or rationalism, ages like the Renaissance or the classical one etc., up to modernism and the avant-garde. In this melting pot the points of contact between Romanian and European culture are: the Enlightenment in the 18th century; Romanticism (middle of the 19th century), the literary and artistic trends of the 20th century (especially symbolism and the avant-garde). Even during the communist period the pro-European tendencies could not be completely destroyed (to say nothing of the part played by the Romanian diaspora in keeping Romanian culture connected to the Western values). "In fact Romanian literature has never entirely left the European space," remarks Adrian Marino (*Pentru Europa*,

2nd edition, p. 63). The critic rejects the rigid distinction between major and minor cultures (another topic intensely debated by Romanian intellectuals). The chances of integration that Romanian literature and culture possess are real, and they are based on qualities such as originality and personality (Marino's liberal stance on this matter is obvious).

The volume ends with two articles on issues pertaining to the fields of the history of ideas and of culture: “‘Luminile’ românești și descoperirea Europei” (The Romanian Enlightenment and the discovery of Europe) and “Din istoria teoriei ‘formă fără fond’” (From the history of the ‘form without content’ theory). Both are documentary in manner and display the same intention to assess all the significant moments in the process of European integration experienced by Romanian literature and ideology. This is a process in which Adrian Marino's entire work played an important part, still insufficiently acknowledged.



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Abstract

The Issue of the European Integration of Romanian Literature in A. Marino's Works

Under the recent circumstances of European cultural integration, a process involving intense trans-national dialogue, every European culture is nowadays going through a process of redefining identities and re-evaluating traditions. Yet the problem of modernization, interpreted as synchronization with the Western values and trends, is not a recent one at all, being constantly discussed in Romanian literary criticism and theory. My paper considers the issue of the European integration of Romanian literature as it was approached by a well-known contemporary Romanian critic of ideas, Adrian Marino (1921–2005). The objectives of this paper are to briefly outline the history of the concept of European integration, from Marino's perspective, and to investigate the means by which this integration took place at different times (cultural import as such, adaptation, influence, coincidence/affinity, etc.).

Keywords

history of ideas, cultural ideology, synchronization, European integration, travel diary