

In memoriam Solomon Marcus

The Rest is Silence*

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In the semioticians' community, the spring of 2016 has come as mournful as, perhaps, never before. Several weeks ago, Umberto Eco died, and today, only days after his 91st anniversary, Solomon Marcus. A tenured member of the Romanian Academy, Vicepresident of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, *doctor honoris causa* of "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, enjoying worldwide recognition for his contributions in domains that the epistemological tradition saw more as disjoint – Mathematics and Computer Science, Linguistics, Poetics and Semiotics –, the academician Solomon Marcus was truly an "honorary citizen" of the city of Bacău, one of its most credible and prestigious ambassadors. An ambassador of Bacău and of the city's school, to which he returned so often, with a solicitude and naturalness that increased the value of his attachment to his hometown, rendering it even more impressive. Several editions of the scientific manifestations organised by the Faculty of Letters and Faculty of Sciences welcomed him as guest of honour.

I believed he enjoyed, especially in his last years, to be the Professor and the Wise Man, and both roles suited him perfectly. On the other hand, the drift of the educational system in recent years demanded personalities able to draw the attention of the public opinion to the real problems of school and guide it towards finding solutions. The academician did not remain indifferent and felt obliged to get involved, supporting the need for a project of reconsideration of the Romanian educational system.

His career was built, I would say, on the coherence of heterogeneity. He saw connections where the tradition of the Sciences and the Humanities had placed borders that could only be transgressed at the risk of losing one's credibility in the academic world. Solomon Marcus encouraged, even legitimized this interdisciplinary dialogue by means of which study domains could become mutually supportive. Through his eyes, the world made sense and life gained meaning. His blue look skated above things, as if seeing everything, understanding everything, but stooping only over what was worthy. Hence, he knew so many interesting things – about numbers, poetry, signs and meanings – which he placed, in a fascinating manner, in edifying, unusual relations.

Years ago, before the '90s, when Romania could not even dream of the Schengen space, he was denied, at one point, the exit visa to participate in a conference in the West. And then – as Solomon Marcus related the event with amusement – Umberto Eco announced in plenary speech that the Romanian guest was not present because he "suffered from passport". Today, they are both gone, and I feel that a world – a little wiser and more fond of books – is also gone. We are left with their memory and their work as testimony of a world that was and of two men that passed, as of their lifetime, into story. Solomon

Marcus is the hero of such an extraordinary biography: a child from a neighbourhood of interwar Bacău, who experienced the horror of the legionary dictatorship of the '40s, and managed to succeed and forgive – and, moreover, to give. A man who equally loved to know and share what he knew. A rare person, made from special alloy. Marcus *forever*.

*Romanian version: „Restul e tăcere”, in
Ateneu, no. 560, 2016, p. 13. http://ateneu.info/wp-content/uploads/at2016_04_net.pdf