

Paul Goma: From the Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood

Review

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Published at “Lumina” Publishing from Chisinau in 2010, being the fifth edition, the novel by Paul Goma *From the Calidor. A Bessarabian childhood*, as the first part of the autobiographical cycle, offers to the novelist the possibility to recover an “age of gold” and, with it, a well-deserved place in the Romanian literature, usurped, by the way, by the dimension of the anti-communist dissidence.

Divided into twenty-one chapters, accompanied by *Foreword*, the writing responds to a need to transcend the real world and the present time, releasing itself from its dominance “here” and “now”, transferring into a space with predilection to reverie and romance. With an exceptional sense of language, we are placed into a “fairytale biotope” exempt of any temporality, in an area over which the naturalness of the rustic existence floats, descending from a long tradition, only the historical events having the power to hardly annihilate the seemingly eternal rusticity of this ideal state, visible in the anti-romance and deconstructive impetuosity of the writing.

Systematically mixing the layers and the chronologies, Paul Goma describes a world ravaged by time, when the space and the time determine the fate of people: “as a son of my father, I am convinced that at first was neither the egg, nor the chicken, but geography – the mother of history: Tell me where you are, in space, so that I can tell you what happened to you in time.”¹ Abolishing the hierarchies, history plays with the destiny of inhabitants of Mana, invading them with shadows, blaming their ideals, replacing the values, making them live in a forever hostile maturity. The cause must be sought, according to I. Negoïtescu, not only in the subsequent course of history, with the well-known vicissitudes, but also the

¹ Paul Goma, *Din Calidor. O copilărie basarabeană* (From the Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood), Lumina, Chișinău, 2010, p. 18.

original impact with it, deeply stuck in the subconscious. That's why – continues the literary critic – *From the Calidor*, Paul Goma's novel, is crossed by a lyricism as authentic as it is larval, more transparent than obvious, welcome in a narrative manner completely devoid of picturesque. A continuous inner crying feeds this lyricism with its lustral and purifying waters.²

“Why haven't left for the first refuge, that from the 40's?”³ – It is the question that apparently concerns the child Goma, essential question addressed to the father “since I was able to ask questions”. Building his *Calidor* around this “Why”, returning “from the distance of forty years and three thousand kilometers – at the beginning, not just in my Mana, in its round universe and round forever, but “by there”; around – as around as possible”⁴, this “son of Bohr”, robbed by history, recovers his freedom, re-begins to live from the moment he can ask questions. Relying, at the beginning, on the incomprehensible reasoning of his father (“you're missing much more easily than less. When you have much to lose, you can afford yourself to lose – you have enough to...,”⁵ the author comes to discover it by his own experience (giving the example of a poetess who, arrived in Paris, said she preferred to starve than to work with her “hands”), being determined to learn and follow it. Bound through the umbilical cord to the mythical time, Paul Goma is bound through the paternal reasoning to the historical time, the family symbolizing a constantly revolving sphere between departure and return, the mother's hand supporting the space of the two wanderings.

Although the novel operates on the full scale of the time, the leitmotif of the composition *I am sitting in the calidor of the house from Mana*, repeated, usually, at the beginning of the chapters, becomes an ordering principle, but acting only at the present time, thus merging with the sole time of Eden.

Even if he does not respect the chronological order of the events, the author builds a balanced prose protected by irony and humor from “falling into sentimentality and romance”, but not from falling from Heaven, “from myth to history”. Eradicated from the sacred space of existence, the child gets from the light into the darkness, the year 1944 marking the beginning of a darkness of refuge for many Bessarabians.

Wanting to cover everything – object reported, in fact, to the whole creation of the Bessarabian, *From the Calidor* represents the beginning, but at the same time, the continuity of *the beginning* (*another beginning*). The author sets no

² Ion Negoitescu, *Scriitori contemporani* (Contemporary Writers), Dacia, Cluj, 1994, p. 195.

³ P. Goma, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

threshold, leaving the door open, so that he could always “have something to do there, around”, *do, redo, re-see, un-do* and *do it again*, “*As the First Day. Of course: from the calidor*”. Breaking the barriers of conventional syntax and becoming a *man of the verb* (skilled for inventions, as he would say), without being free, easy, “literaturized”, cathartic, Paul Goma lives, through his writing, with maximum intensity, parodying and also poetizing and all that “for the benefit of freedom as principle of creation”⁶. Building his work not only from what “have happened”, but rather, from what “would have happened” (“literature does not work with the truth – «it was true», but with the probability, with «it could have been true»“), anticalliphile and anti-mannerist, proving “a different refinement than the formal-aesthetic one, discovering a different poetry than the one having its source in lyricism, ethnography or textual preciousity, the author of the *Passions after Pitesti* programmatically refuses the poeticism, but not the poetry (we could even write Poetry),”⁷ building, from his *Calidor* with *shadows* and *lighst*, not only a history of him, but a history of us all (“his drama perfectly mirrors the drama of the whole nation”), as noted Liviu Cangeopol, reverberating, in various accords, either an ontic tension or a paradisiacal recovery, “but everything according to his living experience”.

Bibliography:

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4. Țurcanu, Andrei, “Paul Goma: atitudine și poezie” (Paul Goma: Attitude and Poetry), *Metaliteratură*, no. 5-6 (25), 2010, pp. 86-902.

⁶ Nina Corcinschi, “Printre figurile și tropii lui Paul Goma” (Among Figures and Tropes of Paul Goma), *Metaliteratură*, no. 5-6 (25), 2010, p. 83.

⁷ Andrei Țurcanu, “Paul Goma: atitudine și poezie” (Paul Goma: Attitude and Poetry), *Metaliteratură*, no. 5-6 (25), 2010, p. 88.