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ABSTRACT

**PAUL GOMA – HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LITERARY CONSCIOUSNESS
(MONOGRAPHIC STUDY)**

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Our main motivation in choosing the *Goma topic* is the way in which, on the background of physical, moral, and psycho-mental trauma caused by the repressive mechanisms of the communist regime, the opposing writer Paul Goma impacted historical consciousness and literary consciousness in the second half of the 20th century, with specific recurrences up to the present day.

Despite some implications that might suggest heightened subjectivities due to history in motion, our endeavour benefits from a chronological distance of over three decades since the fall of the communist regime, and even in relation to other endeavours focusing on Paul Goma's work. The context of scholarly research in the field of history on this topic is weakly represented, while the context of literary criticism is better represented. These findings are based on the outcomes of our own studies, research, and analyses, encompassing over 20 years, which is long enough to agglutinate or distinctly select information, opinions, often unclear, incongruent with demonstrable reality or, on the contrary, in agreement with our outcomes. All these things have contributed to the sedimentation of a particular, integrating, and unitary discourse on the Goma topic. The main novelty consists in analysing the historical, political, cultural context in a broad sense, and the psycho-mental context Paul Goma pertains to, and on which he exerts his influence, through his nonconformist actions (chapter 4), and the ways in which this context highlights the development and public perception on the Human Rights Movement in 1977 (chapter 5). The external context permanently doubles this perspective on the topic. Our work is topical because it proposes a different approach methodology, as to our knowledge, it is the only one dedicated to the opposing writer Paul Goma which analyses and integrates to such an extent the vast "work" of the Securitate, whose subject he is, in a historical context. The documents in the archives of the Securitate and other archives are continuously confronted, through mirroring and cross-examination, with other types of sources, and first and foremost with Goma's work.

Our thesis suggests a double perspective – a horizontal and a vertical one – of the *Goma topic*, which includes scanning individual biography/family-childhood, adolescence, university years, detention, forced residence, Human Rights Movement, exile, all these being related to most of the history of the 20th century. Horizontally, we have tried to highlight the most important events in the writer's life, which often overlap with historical events, the most relevant in the economy of our work being the year 1977, with its Human Rights Movement, initiated by

Paul Goma. Vertically, we have attempted to develop several ideas concerning the public perception of the opposing writer Paul Goma, as well as regarding some mental mechanisms which were recurrent for several decades, under the pressure of, or in deliberate contact with, the institutions of communist repression, more exactly with the Securitate. Among them – imposing some automatisms/labels vehiculated by the literary world and the Securitate agents, such as “Goma has no talent”.

Our endeavour starts from the premise that Paul Goma is not only a subject of recent history or literary history, but an autonomous topic, and its investigation brings us closer both to the person (man and writer) of Goma, and to opening new ways of perceiving and interpreting some of the major topics of the second half of the 20th century, insufficiently anchored in the specialized debate, such as: resistance/opposition/dissidence during Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime. This is a general topic subsuming consubstantial, better delimited topics: conformism *vs.* nonconformism, non-involvement/non-solidarity *vs.* opposition/solidarity. From another perspective, a nonfactual one in the first place, the paradigmatic “Goma case” brings to reader’s attention approaches bordering historical study as such, and interdisciplinary study as well. The “illegitimate and criminal” nature of the communist regime unavoidably urges us to follow the course taken by people, situations, smaller or bigger histories, from the point of view of social psychology or cultural anthropology.

The in-depth study of the “Goma case” offers unexpected directions of research in these areas. Frustrations, animosities, and idiosyncrasies sedimented in reports on the “disposition of the population” reveal essential facts about communist society and its ideological regime. Whether opinions belong to workers, teachers, priests or intellectuals, they create a huge puzzle. Based on selection criteria, their opinions and states of mind take part in building several tableaux, which are as many ways of interpreting the Romanian world during the communist regime. How the heterogeneous world, in terms of culture, profession, religion, nationality or political orientation (in the absence of political options) related to the nonconformist Goma, starting with the early 1970s, culminating with 1977, is a stand-alone historical cut-out.

The writer’s constant concern for understanding and owning history is fully reflected in his diaries and articles. Subjected to political asylum in November 1977, Goma consistently tried to urge Romanian historians and writers to publish uncensored books in the West, in an effort of making Romania and Romanian culture known in the Western world, which did not know much

about them, and what was known was distorted. Convinced that a writer's mission is that of always saying the truth, Goma strongly advocated the non-delimitation of writers' lives/biographies from their work as a precept of ethical conduct.

Strictly factual, Paul Goma's *refuge* is a fundamental part of his biographic trajectory, then of his becoming, of his emotional and artistic, mental and literary coming of age. Comparing him with other Romanian writers from Bessarabia (Vladimir Beșleagă, Aureliu Busuioc, Nicolae Esinencu, Dumitru Crudu), Aliona Grati notices that Paul Goma's works contain an obvious *disruption*. Crossing the Prut – March 1944 – is the beginning of Goma's first external refuge. The task of blowing up his biography goes to the new ideological wave sweeping Europe – communism was about to take hold of Romanian territory and rewrite its history. Everything Paul Goma lived and wrote after that was placed under the sign of the insurgency of the moment.

Our main research hypothesis is that the writer Paul Goma was wronged, both in literature, and in historiography, because of his nonconformism towards any type of power, a nonconformism translated into a permanent need of expressing himself freely. The fundamental thesis of our paper was drawn up starting from this hypothesis: Paul Goma is an ethical and e(a)st-ethical model, beyond minor disagreements, unavoidable in anyone's life, in relationships with others. The defining features of this model are uncomfortable even nowadays for the cultural and political system in Romania, through the numerous recurrences induced by the oppressive regime, generally speaking, in the psycho-mental field even from its beginnings (after 1945), and especially in 1970s, delimited by the new ideological frost (the *July Theses*) and the *Goma Case* (which was born exactly in the early 1970s, before Ceaușescu's *Theses*, and exploded into a Human Rights Movement in 1977).

To understand Goma's biographical trajectory, our research starts with elements delineating the field of identity (chapters 1 and 2: birth, childhood, refuge, adolescence). In chapter 3 we try to identify the main coordinates of the personality of the future historical figure: dropping out of university, first arrest (1956-1958) – in the context of the Budapest Uprising, the period of forced residence in Câmpia Bărăganului (1958-1962), a growing nonconformism, which had been present in Goma even from his teenage years (he was first detained by the Securitate as a student). Starting with chapter 4, both the hypothesis and the fundamental thesis of our research are becoming more and more poignant, through arguments, nuances, and

historical insights, both inter and transdisciplinary. Everything leads to configuring what we have called *Paul Goma – historical consciousness and literary consciousness*. In chapters 5-7, we believe we have achieved the goal of explaining the phenomenon of the Goma Movement as representative and defining for the year 1977 and what followed, proposing an integrated and often original discourse – based on a vast documenting and analytical effort.

Going beyond strict factual events and creating a credible narrative, we have attempted a deeper interrogation of the historical time delimiting our research, subsuming not only facts, people, and states of affairs, but also mentalities which include attitudes and behaviours. Particularly, a certain type of protest or silence, of active involvement or non-involvement, of solidarity or, on the contrary, of non-solidarity, and/or retractions and denunciations. Following Braudel, history and mentalities can be more accurately analysed and understood by choosing to deepen structures, not singular heroes or “major” events. This is the reason why some details, sequences or mini-structures seem to repeat themselves, but their meaning is deliberately repetitive, not only for basic didactic purposes, but also in order to identify several perspectives in showing how an event develops through its consequences, an important idea in a particular time or a concept in its hermeneutical unfolding. In this case, we have tried to propose an analysis which introduces interpretative options of a general character about the writer Paul Goma – his personality, work, and the historical age he left his mark on. Some of the notions and concepts approached in relation to this thesis may work as general opinions on Goma’s historical and literary work, on the one hand, and on a short period of history, unlike Braudel’s *long duration*, and the last decades of communism in Romania, respectively. Historical time changes linearities and duration, which expand and contract depending on the approached structural sequence, influenced by both ideological intensity of the changes spanning the 20th century in terms of a universal consciousness, and of a national consciousness increasingly weaker under the assault of the same ideology bearing the marks of local communism. The Human Rights Movement in Romania is analysed diachronically and synchronically, and the context ante- and post-Movement is approached in a structurality rid of the fashion of placing figures at the centre of events. A strictly positivist approach would have had a suffocating outcome, as Goma’s bibliography is a very vast field. To understand how the history of the 7th and 8th decades were configured politically, socially and culturally in Romania, we had to identify mental mechanisms as well, going up to the limit of the psychoanalyzable, not only through important

figures/representatives, but also through ways of expression and reaction or nonreaction of some professional categories, such as that of the writers.

The year 1977 was the culmination of dissidence for Paul Goma, who was forced to endure, caught between the predictable repressive reaction of the communist regime, and the equally predictable and unpredictable reaction of non-involvement in the intellectual environment. One of the conclusions of our research paper is that, despite some notable exceptions, in the two decades 1970-1980, the intellectual, literary, and artistic milieu planted the seeds for the “complex of illegitimate representation in the civic society”, as O. Nimigean labelled the state of Romanian society in December 1989. Missing the proper moment of joining the Human Rights Movement initiated by Paul Goma in 1977, it missed its chance of turning into a representative and relevant civic movement as alternative to the monopolizing discourse of the regime. The measures of discreditation, influencing and annihilation of the Securitate, on the background of intellectuals’ massive non-involvement, made such an aspiration impossible.