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EVOKING CHILDHOOD MEMORIES DURING WAR AND PEACE: PAUL GOMA'S *FROM CALIDOR. A BESSARABIAN CHILDHOOD* AND LUCIAN BLAGA'S *THE CHRONICLE AND SONG OF AGES* AND POEMS

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Abstract. The present paper aims at giving a brief insight into the writers' manner of depicting childhood during wartime and during peacetime. Childhood should be the most wonderful period, but history can interfere harshly and bring along many hardships and pain. However, even under these unfortunate circumstances, a child has the magic power of turning the evil into a luminous experience. Throughout the adult life, the terror of history is the very trigger of the eternal return to the Eden of childhood time and to a favourite *locus*, usually the native home. Paul Goma's *From Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood* novel provides a good example for the manner in which a writer depicts childhood during wartime whereas, on the other hand, Lucian Blaga's *The Chronicle and Song of Ages* memoir is an appropriate example for the way in which a writer talks about childhood during peacetime. As Blaga is one of Romania's greatest poets, we have the unique opportunity to see how he refers to childhood in some of his poems, too. Mention should be made of the fact that, from the style point of view, metaphors are the most important figures of speech resorted to in order to depict childhood.

Irrespective of the fact that childhood is depicted during war or peace, it manages to keep its magic, being a special state of mind, time and space. Therefore, it provides the perfect time and space to retreat in front of the terror of history. The favourite space, the so-called *locus*, of childhood is the native house or the homeland, the native country. The relationship between the terror of history and childhood refers to binary categories such as ephemeral/eternal, history/eternity, labyrinth/freedom. Remembering childhood is similar to a ritual of recovering an ideal, a mystical time. Childhood can be interpreted as a metaphor of the moment before the birth of time, with an immutable space, purged of the effects of passing, of non-exemplary events. The desire of the mature to return to childhood is actually the human desire to place himself/herself in eternity, converting duration into eternal time.

Keywords: childhood during wartime; the terror of history; childhood during peacetime; the eternal return to the Eden of childhood time and *locus*; prose and poetry childhood metaphors.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood and History

As a rule, childhood is the most beautiful time in the life of people and literature is the witness of marvelous examples of happy childhood which is experienced a magic state of mind, a special time and space. It helps building one's own personality

and guides a reader throughout entire life. Times and times again, one come back to it, to gather strength, to rebuild one's torn soul, to better understand oneself.

A special category of childhood is the one taking place in wartime. It has totally different coordinates. It brings unrest, danger, cruelty, and the untimely meeting death. However, in spite of all these, it somehow manages to keep its magic.

The terror of history¹ generates the so-called eternal return to childhood by restoring a positive, Eden-like time: childhood with its favorite *locus*² - the native house, the homeland³, the native country - another form of paradise-, an element of nature (a plant, a tree, a forest) or a loved one (parents, siblings, friends) or even a mere object.

Defense against historical terror is done by escaping from reality, non-adhesion to the concrete historical moment and may take several forms: the art of creating, reading, remembering means returning to the paradisiacal state of happy childhood, painting, music, etc. The relationship between the terror of history and childhood refers to binary categories such as ephemeral/eternal, history/eternity, labyrinth⁴/freedom. Adhesion to the present moment implies a wandering in the labyrinth of maya and a generation of distressing states. Returning to childhood is entering eternity, overcoming duration, ignoring time, that is ignoring the present, the perishable, the ephemeral. Remembering childhood is similar to a ritual of recovering an ideal, a mystical time, an *illud tempus/illo tempore*, a time subtracted from duration, that time called by Mircea Eliade "hierophantic time", i.e. a time that includes both the mythical and the religious, a piece of the Great Time, a transhistorical time, "a rupture of the profane duration and an invasion of the Great Time" (Blaga, 1992, p. 362). Thus, childhood becomes a metaphor for the moment before the birth of time, with an immutable space, purged of the effects of passing, of non-exemplary events. The desire of the mature person to return to childhood is actually the human desire to place himself/herself in an ahistorical time, in the center, in eternity, converting duration into eternal time.

The terror of history does not necessarily mean war, it could very well be an authoritarian regime or simply the inability to integrate into a generation or a deep

¹ The concept of the *terror of history* is taken over from Mircea Eliade's *Ordeal by Labyrinth (Încercarea labirintului)* and it refers to "the experience of a man who is no longer religious, who, therefore has no hope of finding an ultimate meaning to the drama of history, but who finds himself forced to endure the crimes of history without understanding their meaning. (...) when historical events are emptied of any transhistorical significance and if they are no longer what they were for the traditional world - trials for a people or for an individual - then we are dealing with what I called the Terror of history" ("experiența unui om care nu mai este religios, care nu are deci nicio speranță să găsească o semnificație ultimă dramei istoriei, ci care se vede nevoit să suporte crimele istoriei fără să le înțeleagă rostul. (...) când evenimentele istorice sunt golite de orice semnificație transistorică și dacă ele nu mai sunt ceea ce au fost pentru lumea tradițională - încercări pentru un popor sau pentru un individ - atunci avem de-a face cu ceea ce am numit eu, "Teroarea istoriei") (Eliade, 1990, p. 111).

² According to Mircea Eliade, temporality is in connection with architecture in the sense that there is a relation between temporal symbolism and spatial symbolism (Eliade, 1990, p. 33).

³ "Every homeland constitutes a sacred geography. For those who have left it, the city of their childhood and adolescence always becomes a mythical city" („Orice pământ natal alcătuiește o geografie sacră. Pentru cei care l-au părăsit, orașul copilăriei și al adolescenței devine mereu un oraș mitic") (Eliade, 1990, p. 34).

⁴ The concept of labyrinth is taken from Mircea Eliade and refers to the various successive experiences, seen as tests, which we have to face in life. Reaching the centre of the labyrinth, we achieve individual initiation (Eliade, 1990, pp. 157-160).

nostalgia for the past. The time of historical becoming is oppressive and painful, it has an erosive action. In the present paper, the terror of history refers only to war.

The preoccupation with escaping history can be conscious or unconscious. The sacred time of childhood that is reached after escaping terror depends on the personality of each and every individual: it can be childhood as a whole or it can be only a part of it, such as the parental home, the homeland, a part of nature, a tree, an animal, a parental figure, etc.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

For exemplification, I have chosen to discuss a Romanian childhood unfolding during wartime and one unfolding during peace time, as they are depicted in literature. I am exemplifying the former by resorting to Paul Goma's *Din calidor O copilărie basarabeană*. (*From Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood*) novel, whereas the latter is presented by means of Lucian Blaga's *Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor* (*The Chronicle and Song of Ages*) memoir. What is unique in the case of Blaga is that we can have a hint of his attitude towards childhood by means of his poetry, too. Being such a complex personality, a philosopher as well as a poetry and a prose writer, we have the unique possibility to examine his view on childhood both in prose and in poetry.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Paul Goma: *Din Calidor. O Copilărie Basarabeană* (*From Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood*)

Paul Goma's autobiographical novel *Din calidor. O copilărie basarabeană*. (*From Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood*) is suggestive for a Romanian childhood affected by the war. The memories contained in this novel, stirred by emotion and tenderness, have at their center the land of Bessarabia, with its customs and people over which history and politics have drawn other borders. For Goma, *axis mundi*⁵ (the "axis of the world") is, from the point of view of time, his childhood, and, from the point of view of *locus* - the "navel of the earth", the *omphalos* - the corridor of the family home in Mana, the *calidor*, to which the eternal return of the writer takes place: "Everything in connection with me leaves from there and from that time, everything returns then and there, after definitive leavings, after wide and perfectly-round detours. (...) always the same starting point: the corridor. (...) As I move away from it, point-of-departure, as I get closer to it, point-of-arrival, the time being like my road, round"⁶ (Goma, 1990, p. 5-6). The eternal return to the *calidor* is emphasized throughout the novel over and over again: "...but I return, without rest

⁵ Concept taken over from Mircea Eliade, referring to the vertical line connecting Up and Down, Up being the Sacred (religious value) and Down being the mundane (as anti-religious value).

⁶ Our translation of the original "Totul îmi pleacă de acolo și de atunci, toate se întorc, după definitive dusuri, după ochiuri largi și perfect-rotunde- atunci și acolo. Mereu același punct de plecare: calidorul. (...) Pe măsură ce mă îndepărtez de el, punct-de-plecare, mă și apropiu de punctul-de-sosire, timpul fiindu-mi ca drumul, rotund" (Goma, 1990, p. 5-6)

and without effort, always to the same starting point: the *calidor*⁷ (Goma, 1990, p. 6), “I am sitting in Calidor and I am trembling”⁸ (Goma, 1990, p. 126, p. 127), “...above it rains, below it flows... Better in Calidor”⁹ (Goma, 1990, p. 127), “So I'm sitting in my *calidor*. When you sit in the *calidor*, it's like being where you want to be, but sheltered”¹⁰ (Goma, 1990, p. 128).

He is so connected to his family home, that he feels it to be like a second womb, and the *calidor* is felt as an umbilical cord, a passageway between being and non-being, between created and uncreated: “(...) my place of return is, not completely inside, like the still-unborn, but in the corridor, that vestibule open to both sides, that proximal, not definitive outside, that place in full air and in light and in shade and in heat, exposed to aggressions - but not to mortal aggressions: so that I can step back at any time, to shelter”¹¹ (Goma, 1990, p.6)

The etymology of the word *calidor* is also impressive. It refers to the Greek *kali* and the Romanian *dor*: “Thus, the Greek *kali* and the Romanian *dor* - the longing which is sung, the longing sighed between the Dnestr River and the Pruth River, after 1812, more than in any other Romanian land, beautiful-longing, that special longing that engulfs you when (from the *calidor*), with your gaze stained with grief, you look beyond, towards West, where you think there is the Pruth River, the cursed river, which cut us in two, since the Russians took half of Moldavia from us and baptized it: Bessarabia...”¹² (Goma, 1990, p. 5-6).

What is unique is the fact that the family home was not owned by the parents, but by the state, as it was a wing of the school, his father being a teacher. He postponed the departure to the refuge, beyond the Pruth River, immediately after the 28th of June 1940, when Bessarabia and Bucovina were ceded to the Russians (until 1944) when Romania received an ultimatum from the Soviet Union to cede Bessarabia, Bukovina and Herța. The Soviet troops arrived more quickly and took prisoners the Romanians who had not hurried to leave, including Goma's father. Then, Romania entered into an alliance with Hitler's Germany and when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union through Operation Barbarossa, on the 23th of June 1940, Romanian troops recaptured Bessarabia. Goma's father returns home but he is done injustice even from the Romanians authorities that suspect him of being a spy for the Russians as he is among the few survivors from the Russian camps. Goma's family flees to Romania in 1944, when the Soviet armies enter Bessarabia again, occupying

⁷ Our translation of the original “...însă mă întorc, fără odihnă și fără efort spre mereu același punct de plecare: calidorul” (Goma, 1990, p. 6).

⁸ Our translation of the original “Stau în Calidor și tremur” (Goma, 1990, p. 126, p. 127),

⁹ Our translation of the original “...desupra plouă, dedesubt curge... Mai bine în calidor” (Goma, 1990, p. 127).

¹⁰ Our translation of the original “Așa că stau în calidorul meu. Când stai în calidor, e ca și cum ai fi acolo unde vrei tu, dar la adăpost” (Goma, 1990, p. 128).

¹¹ Our translation of the original “ (...) locul meu de întoarcere este, nu înăuntru de tot, ca încă-nenăscuții, ci în calidor, acel vestibul deschis spre ambele părți, acel afară proxim și nu definitiv, acel loc la aer și lumină și umbră și căldură, expus ageșunilor- dar nu mortale: oricând pot face pasul înapoi, la adăpos” (Goma, 1990, p.6).

¹² Our translation of the original “Carevasăzică, grecescul *kali* și românescul *dor* – dorul cântat, dorul oftat între Nistru și Prut, după 1812, mai mult decât în oricare alt ținut românesc, dor-frumos, acel dor special care te cuprinde atunci când (din calidor), cu privirea împăinjenită de jale, cați încolo, înspre Asfințit, unde bănuiești Prutul, râu blestemat, care-n două ne-a tăiat, de când Moscalii ne-au luat jumătate din Țara Moldovei și au botezat-o: Basarabia...” (Goma, 1990, p. 5-6).

it, heading towards Germany, which they will defeat. Until today, Bessarabia remained far from Romania.

All these historical torments severely affected the lives of the people and brought an enormous amount of stress to all the children. As a rule, children have two sources of stress: on the one hand, the direct stress caused by the brutal interference of history, and, on the other hand, the indirect stress perceived from those around them. In Goma's case, the primary source of stress is the Russian invasion, and the secondary source of stress is the stress of his mother and of the inhabitants of his home village, Mana, which the child utterly perceives.

His mother desperately waits for her husband to return home and the child witnesses this anxiety. He records absolutely everything with utmost accuracy but becomes aware of what is really happening only later, even if, on an unconscious level, everything is as clear as possible. The tension is constant and in crescendo. The very moment a city is liberated, his mother goes there to find out if her husband is among the returning ones. Mother always finds out who has returned from prison and from which village he is, and immediately goes there to ask about her husband: "Sometimes she returns crying, sometimes almost cheerful, but from the next trip she comes crying again: no news; or bad ones"¹³ (Goma, 1990, p. 107).

The child is also patiently waiting for his father, so he is experiencing his own waiting, but in the *calidor*, again in the *calidor*, which has also become a space of waiting, not only of withdrawal: "I wait in the calidor. I wait, sometimes, for two or three days in a row"¹⁴ (Goma, 1990, p. 107). But dad never came back, the writer resorting again to the technique of repetition to render the boundless sadness: "Late, in the fall, mom doesn't receive telegrams anymore; she doesn't go - to Cernăuți and Ismail, to Bălți and Călărași anymore. Late in the fall, my mother dresses in black. That's it, no hope. (...) That's it, I'm an orphan"¹⁵ (Goma, 1990, p. 108). The sweet Moldavian language seems to soften the pain of the loss of the father, the writer becoming an *orfănel*, that is a diminutive form of the word *orphan* (Goma, 1990-p. 108). The *calidor* becomes the place of retreat in view of alleviating the pain: "I sit in the *calidor*. I sit - and that's it. That's it, because after my father's funeral, the memories don't flow anymore. They jump. Like grasshoppers. From here, who knows where else. But no: I don't know from where, from where I do not expect- but still falling into the *calidor*"¹⁶ (Goma, 1990, p. 109).

After the presumed death of his father, his mother takes over his directorship of the school in the fall of 1941. However, his father did not die and, one day, a stranger enters their courtyard and the emotion felt by the child is breathtaking. At first, he

¹³ Our translation of the original: "Uneori se întoarce plângând, alteori aproape veselă, dar din următoarea călătorie tot plângând vine: nicio veste; sau proastă" (Goma, 1990, p. 107).

¹⁴ Our translation of the original: "Eu aștept în calidor. Aștept, uneori, câte două, câte trei zile de-a rândul" (Goma, 1990, p. 107).

¹⁵ Our translation of the original: "Târziu, toamna, mama nu mai primește telegrame; nu se mai duce - la Cernăuți și la Ismail, la Bălți și la Călărași. Târziu, toamna, mama se îmbracă în negru. Gata, nicio nădejde. (...) Gata, sunt orfănel" (Goma, 1990, p. 108).

¹⁶ Our translation of the original: "Stau în calidor. Stau - și gata. Gata, pentru că după înmormântarea tatei, amintirile nu mai curg. Ci sar. Ca lăcustele. De ici, cine știe unde. Ba nu: de nuștiuunde, de undenumăaștept- dar tot în calidor căzând" (Goma, 1990, p. 109).

does not recognize him but, little by little, looking at some of his clothes, he realizes the man was his father: “I am...You don't know me anymore...”, “Yes, I do...I do. Yes. (...) the man crossing the yard, approaching the stairs of the *calidor*, hesitating, with trembling lips, is my father. He came back. He hugs me, crying, I hug him, crying. But I'm also crying for another reason: this dad doesn't smell like the dad I forgot”¹⁷ (Goma, 1990, p. 152-153). History did not make him a complete victim and the family happily reunited after so much pain. However, in 1944, history interferes once more in their lives when they really have to run away in front of the Russian invasion. The last Christmas spent in Bessarabia in 1943 is so touching! Millenary traditions connected with the love for the native land intertwine with the sadness of the forced departure. Everything is all the more touching as the entire community takes part in this good-bye Christmas celebration because, even if people are reluctant to leave their native homes and land, history interferes brutally with their lives and God`s will be done (Goma, 1990, p. 181). All the inhabitants of Mana gather around the huge Christmas tree in the middle of the school ground. Both the schoolchildren and their relatives sing carols. Somehow, they all felt that it was their last Christmas at their homes, with the celebration of the Romanian traditions: “People could feel the destruction was coming. They felt it was their last Christmas. It would have been our last Christmas, too, if we hadn't left”¹⁸. (Goma, 1990, p. 183). The child is deeply touched as his memory records the emotion in detail.

Mention should also be made of Goma`s tender description of the family home, household and of his village. The writer also evokes the villagers of Mana tenderly, creating picturesque portraits. Some of the images evoked are comical, such as the strategy used by several villagers to avoid being drafted into the army by cutting off the index finger of their right hand. The one who engaged in this operation was called a “army cutter/reliever” and, for a few rubles, he would cut off the finger or even the entire right hand. He could even shoot, with a pistol, the index finger, crooked it, passing it over the middle one, and bound the palm between the boards, so that it would heal crookedly. (Goma, 1990, p.107). The mayor, Moș Iacob, was such “army cutter/reliever”. At the same time, the emotional portrayal of Goma`s parents and their love story stand out among the most impressive parts of the book.

Lucian Blaga: *Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor (The Chronicle and Song of Ages)* and some poems dealing with childhood: *Din copilăria mea (From My Childhood)*, *Ghimpii (Thorns)* and *Cuvinte către fata necunoscută din poartă (Words for the Unknown Girl Standing in the Gateway)*

Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor (The Chronicle and Song of Ages) is a memoir. Being a *bildungsroman*, it spans a longer period of time than the childhood but,

¹⁷ Our translation of the original: “Eu sunt....Nu mă mai cunoști...”, “Ba parcă...Ba da. Da. (...) bărbatul care străbate curtea, se apropie de scara *calidorului*, șovăitor, cu buzele stânse și tremurânde, e tata. S-a întors. Mă îmbrățișează, lăcrimând, îl îmbrățișez, plângând. Eu însă plâng și din altă pricină: tata, acesta, nu miroase ca tata acela, pe care l-am uitat” (Goma, 1990, p. 152-153).

¹⁸ Our translation of the original: “Oamenii simțeau prăpădul cum vine. Simțeau că e ultimul lor Crăciun. Ar fi fost și al nostrum, ultimul, dacă n-am fi plecat” (Goma, 1990, p. 183).

even so, it is extremely illustrative for the topic under discussion. In the case of Blaga, too, *axis mundi*, the *omphalos* is, from the temporal point of view, the childhood, and, from the place point of view, his native village, Lacrăm, to which he also dedicated poems. In this respect, mention should be made of the poem *9th of May* which epitomizes Blaga's enormous love for his birthplace and, at the same time, the poet's destiny which is doomed to be a difficult one, filled with hardships and tears (*tears* is the English for *lacrimi*, therefore, the very name of the village is a direct indication of sadness)¹⁹, intertwined with the sad destiny of a historical Romanian province, Transylvania. Thus, it can be explained the reference to Lacrăm as a "village of tears without cure" (Blaga, 2012, p. 11). In the case of Blaga, just like in the case of Goma, history had a major influence. When he was born, in 1895, Transylvania belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire because the latter conquered it towards the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. The Romanians were suffering a lot because they were separated from their mother country Romania and had no rights. During the World War I, in July-August 1916, the Romanian army crosses the Carpathians to free Transylvania but it is soon defeated and the German and Austrian troops conquer almost the entire Romania, the Government retreating to Iasi. Then, Romania joins the Entente (the alliance comprising England, France and Russia) and obtained victory against The Central Powers (the alliance comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire). Due to the enforcement of the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Treaty, Romania was given Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukovina. All these events were lived by Blaga, some of them affecting him more, others less. Throughout his childhood, thanks to his beloved family, he lived a calm life, being able to enjoy the common childish pleasant things and to develop a healthy soul, mind and body. At this stage in his life, history was unfolding rather in the background.

Blaga's early age lies under the shadow of a "fabulous absence of the word" (Blaga, 2012, p. 11). This "initial silence" (Blaga, 2012, p. 11), which lasted his first four years, has bewildered everybody and couldn't be explained from the medical point of view. This is unusual all the more that Blaga is considered one of the greatest Romanian poets, thus a real magician of words.

He was the last in a family with nine children. He always considered that his birth came to fill the gap caused by the untimely death of a little sister, Lelia.

The geography of Blaga's childhood is rendered very brightly, from the perspective of maturity.

Blaga makes an impressive and exhaustive portrait of his native house as an "old building, rather bulky as compared to the surrounding houses" (Blaga, 2012, p. 16). It was inherited from a relative who was a priest. The presentation of the native house is quite picturesque. It was surrounded by two small gardens enclosed by walls: a

¹⁹ "My village, that you bear in your name/ the sounds of tears,/ as an answer to deep calls of mothers/that night, I chose you/ as threshold of world/ and path of passion./ He, who guided me to you/ from the bottom of the ages ./ he, who called me in you,/ be blessed, / village of tears without cure." our translation of the original verses "Sat al meu, ce poști în nume/ sunetele lacrimiei,/ la chemări adânci de mume/ în cea noapte te-am ales/ ca prag de lume/ și poteca patimei./ Spre tine cine m-a ndrumat/ din străfund de veac,/ în tine cine m-a chemat/ fie binecuvântat, / sat de lacrimi fără leac" (Blaga, 2012, p. 11).

flower garden and a garden where different plants were cultivated. This latter garden also had a pine tree and huge chestnut. The part played by this chestnut is big as Blaga always felt a deep connection between it and the destiny of his family, a fact that is best supported by the fact that it died the very year Blaga's father died (Blaga, 2012, p. 16). He also thought that a genie was living underneath the bark of the chestnut.

There were stone stairs leading from the courtyard inside the house which was entirely covered by wild vine. The house also had a basement full of toads and a summer kitchen, guarded by a mulberry under which they used to have lunch, accompanied by the enthralling song of birds.

The native house had four rooms. There was a big temperature difference between the guest room and the rest of the rooms. Like in most Romanian countryside houses, the guest room was the most impressive of all rooms, it was kept under lock all the time and it was always very cold. Blaga liked to cross the forbidden realm and explore it: the two walnut cabinets, a Biedermeyer chest of drawers and especially a singing table clock which had a scary legend and, if triggered, sang two Viennese melodies.

Blaga's physical childhood world was very limited, although he couldn't realize that back then. However, as long as it was very happy and calm, it didn't matter the size. In the backyard, there was a huge barn which was gave a feeling of steadfastness, constancy and duration. Behind the barn, there was a tall haystack and a willow: "This was my world: the house, the barn, the haystack behind the barn, in which, every summer, I used to make a genuine labyrinth, in the cubicles of which I stuffed melons, to make them ripen sooner"²⁰ (Blaga, 2012, p. 20). The metaphors of geological formations express the child's bewilderment when seeing the beauty of the native lands: "My view to the east was encompassed by the Coast with vineyards and red ravines, some bizarre geological formations like a fairytale architecture or like a settlement of Egyptian temples, like flint columns and fire"²¹ (Blaga, 2012, p. 20). As a child, Blaga was convinced that the Apuseni Mountains were the very edge of the world and that, beyond them, there was only the story. He did not know the exact name of the two peaks of the Apuseni Mountains but he considered them his guarding deities (Blaga, 2012, p. 20).

The portrait that Blaga draws to his parents is also impressive. His father was a priest, an industrious householder and it was spectacular that he had the initiative to bring all kinds of devices in the village to make the peasants' lives easier. He enjoyed a high prestige among the villagers. He had a wide culture and he was extremely intelligent, his intelligence covering several domains such as science, mainly mathematics and engineering, as well as universal literature and philosophy.

²⁰ Our translation of the original: "Aceasta era lumea mea: casa, șura, stogul de paie de după șură, în care îmi făceam, în fiecare vară, un adevărat labirint, în firidele căruia îndesam pepeni galbeni, să se coacă mai degrabă. Zarea mea spre răsărit era cuprinsă de Coastă cu viile și cu râpele roșii" (Blaga, 2012, p. 20).

²¹ Our translation of the original: „Zarea mea spre răsărit era cuprinsă de Coastă cu viile și cu râpele roșii, niște formațiuni geologice bizare ca o arhitectură de poveste sau ca o așezare de temple egiptene, ca colonne de cremene și foc” (Blaga, 2012, p. 20).

His attitude towards his children was rather a harsh one, trimmed by lack of interest. He was also a great lover of books (he used to read mainly German literature all day long, lying on the bed, up to two o'clock at night): "I have known my father only as a passionate man of books"²² (Blaga, 2012, p. 19).

Discovering the pleasure of reading under the influence of his father's reading habits is an important moment in Blaga's childhood. In fact, reading helped Blaga overcome the feeling of emptiness he felt in his native house, when some of his brothers were away. He discovered some old collections of *Convorbiri literare* (*Literary Conversations*) and he read a part of *Faustus* which awakened in him, at the age of 13, the most insatiable passion for reading. He also discovered philosophical studies and has a revelation: "I was no longer alone. I was meeting with someone"²³ (Blaga, 2012, p. 97).

His mother was the real foundation of the family and of the household. She worked from dawn till dusk: "Mother was doing a hard work from morning until midnight with unparalleled skill and strengthen the foundations of the house"²⁴ (Blaga, 2012, p. 52). She was rather a simple being, without too many studies, endowed with prehistorical maternal and feminine instincts. She led a life bordered by magic, a life intertwined with mysterious powers. Although she was the wife of a priest, she was not a religious person, coming to church only for Christmas and Easter, her religiosity having folklore and superstitious tinges. Blaga resorts to metaphors in order to describe her "Mother was the active substance around which all the customs of our life took tangible form"²⁵ (Blaga, 2012, p. 52). She used to be a very beautiful woman but the child only sees her as a impersonal being who never allowed herself to dream. She is portrayed as an older, grizzled person, a little crooked, with wide, fairytale eyes. The spiritual portrait is utterly impressive: "Mother was an embodiment of tenderness and care"²⁶ (Blaga, 2012, p. 48).

His friends during the period he had five to seven years old, are portrayed in a very emotional manner. His best friend was a little girl, named Rafila. He also had other friends, such as Vasile Bănăţeanu, Roman and Adam. He couldn't stay away from them too long because he suffered a lot. Blaga refers to this period as an „age lit by the aurora” (Blaga, 2012, p. 22).

The games they played were interesting. In this respect, sand played an essential part. They built vaults, labyrinths, churches using sand. He even wanted to become a church builder, that is an architect. They used to live in a real kingdom of sand. It was a time of almost infinite play, during which they also quarrelled and then came to terms, "the memory of insults being burnt on the fire of hearts" (Blaga, 2012, p. 23).

Blaga also makes an extremely delicate and luminous rendering of his childhood adventures. In this respect, mention should be made of the episode about grazing the geese. This occupies a special place as it is rendered both in prose (in *The Chronicle*

²² Our translation of the original: "Pe tata nu l-am pomenit decât ca un pasionat om al cărţii" (Blaga, 2012, p. 19).

²³ Our translation of the original "Nu mai eram singur. Mă întâlneam cu cineva" (Blaga, 2012, p. 97).

²⁴ Our translation of the original „Mama se sfârâma din ceasul dimineţii până-n miez de noapte cu neasemuită destoinicie şi întărea temelurile casei” (Blaga, 2012, p. 52).

²⁵ Our translation of the original "Mama era substanţa activă în jurul căreia luau înfăţişare palpabilă toate rânduicile vieţii noastre” (Blaga, 2012, p. 52).

²⁶ Our translation of the original "Mama era o întrupare a duiosiei şi a grijii” (Blaga, 2012, p. 48).

and the Song of Ages) and in poetry (the poem *Din copilăria mea* (*From My Childhood*)). In spite of the fact that Blaga and his friends' duty seemed to be only to grow up, however, sometimes, they were asked to do something useful for their households, such as to greeze the geese. Their utmost pleasure was to come back home with the geese full. However, one day, he lost all 15 geese. He looked for them a lot but in vain. He cried a lot, confessed that to his parents and eventually recovered them with the help of his father.

An important moment in Blaga's life occurred in 1906, when he had to leave his native home, his heaven on earth, to go to Șaguna Highschool in Brașov. The sadness of departure and the longing for his parents are also metaphorically expressed: "A feeling of black alienation took over me. It seemed to me that I was no longer me, but someone else. An unyielding grief came over me in my heart, in my temples, through my eyes and I felt a lump in my throat. I saw myself abandoned. I won't see Mother and Father again for a whole year. What cure will I find for this emptiness? I felt torn apart by all the distance between where we were and where we had started. And I cried monotonously and long, and no one could soothe me. (...) I felt as if space and time had cast an evil spell on me"²⁷ (Blaga, 2012, p. 81).

However, the most important event of his early life occurred when he was about to begin the 3rd year at high-school. It was his father's untimely death and the pain he felt was devastating, absolutely overwhelming. He passed through all the stages of mourning, from disbelief, acceptance, suppressed pain and releasing pain: "And I started screaming. But the scream seemed very unreal to me. And it wasn't saying anything about what I was really feeling. And I said to myself: It's not true. Father? It's impossible! Then I retreated into a corner, tore myself into an unheard and endless inner whimper"²⁸.

The period of his father's disease prior to his death, is also accurately described. It had a huge impact on his peaceful existence. Coming back from Brașov where he studied, during the Easter holiday, he is told by his mother that his father is sick. The child notices traces of disease on his father's appearance which he describes painfully. Towards the end, his father was reduced to a mere "bone building": "He hit me sharply in the heart. (...). Father! His eyes weren't sparkling as before. The light blue of his gaze was now descending to gray. He was thin, his forehead dewy with sweat. (...). It was a shadow with its breath cut to a quarter. Everything had gone out in him: the blood, the voice. Only the fever and the cough erupted strongly from his bone building"²⁹ (Blaga, 2012, p. 95-96).

²⁷ Our translation of the original "Un simțământ de neagră înstrăinare mă luă în stăpânire. Mi se părea că nu mai sunt eu, ci altul. Mă năpădea o jale de neînduplecat pe la inimă, pe la tâmpile, prin ochi și se alegea nod în gât. Mă vedeam părăsit. n-am să mai văd pe Mamași Tata un an întreg. Ce leac voi găsi acestui gol? Mă simțeam destrămat prin toată depărtarea, între locul unde stam și locul de unde pornisem. Și plângeam monoton și lung, și nimenea nu putea să mă liniștească. (...) Mă deochiasse spațiul și timpul" (Blaga, 2012, p. 99-81).

²⁸ Our translation of the original: "Și începui să țip. Dar țipătul mi se părea mie însumiireal. Și nu spunea nimic din ceea ce simțeam. Și-mi spuneam: Nu-i adevărat. Tata? E cu neputință! Pe urmă m-am retras într-un colț, m-am sfâșiat într-un neauzit și fără capăt scâncet interior" (Blaga, 2012, p. 99-100).

²⁹ Our translation of the original: "M-a lovit cu ascuțiș în inimă. (...). Tata! Ochii nu îi mai scăpărau ca altădată. Albastrul deschis al privirii sale cobora acum spre cenușiu. Era sleit, cu fruntea înrouată de sudoare. (...) Era o umbra cu respirația rețezată la un sfert. Totul se stinsese în el: sângele, glasul. Numai febra și tusea izbucneau puternice din clădirea lui de oase" (Blaga, 2012, p. 95-96).

His father's death caused a painful relocation of his family from Lacrăm to Sebeș, "the supreme sacrifice" (Blaga, 2012, p. 103), accompanied by many regrets that he could not take a more active part in the life of the village, and that he could not fulfil his dream of participating to evening sittings, as he planned. As a symbol of the process of dissolution of his former existence, something tragic also occurred: the poisoning of his beloved dog, Nero. The relocation also means a serious mind unrest because his strong beliefs, the ones belonging mainly to Christian tradition, which were taught to him by his parents, collided with other beliefs that he discovered while reading books written under the influence of Ramakrishna and Vedanta philosophy: "A small citizen of a village in Transylvania entered a new world, one which seemed to him paradoxical and sublime twisted as compared to the Christian vision" (Blaga, 2012, p. 105). At the same time, the relocation marks the beginning of his attempts to write poetry, a fact which he expresses so metaphorically as: "I was trying to feel with my nail the serrations of the poetic gift. And I strained my ear to hear if the metal inside sounded or no"³⁰.

The Chronicle and Song of Ages goes on with Blaga's adolescence and youth. As we said before, the terror of history affected Blaga's life later on, having a strong impact on it, for example when he was prevented from studying philosophy abroad as the war broke out, thus, being forced to enroll in the Faculty of Theology in Sibiu. However, the memory of the Eden of his childhood time and native home, on the one hand, and the act of writing, on the other, helped him survive and eventually overcome all hardships generated by war. In this respect, it is illustrative the following highly metaphoric quote which stands proof of the terrible pain and regret Blaga experienced because of war: "I retreated into my inner bushes. I hardly ever went out in the city. It was getting harder and harder for me to bear the human race. This human race that was able to start such an incredible war for such stupid reasons! And just at the moment when the secret wings of triumphant youth were supposed to grow from the shoulder blades of my adolescence"³¹ (Blaga, 2012, p. 161-162).

As mentioned above, we can proceed by analysing some of Blaga's poems dealing with childhood, focussing on style, namely on metaphors, as they are the core and quintessence of poetry. For this purpose, I have selected three poems: *Din copilăria mea (From My Childhood)*, *Ghimpii (Thorns)* and *Cuvinte către fata necunoscută din poartă (Words for the Unknown Girl Standing in the Gateway)*. The major focus will be on metaphors, as they are the most relevant figures of speech for the topic under discussion. Named metaseemes by the traditional stylistics of the μ Group (μ Group, 1974, p. 132-181), approached as cognitive metaphors and considered pervasive in everyday language and thought by cognitive linguistics (Larkoff, Turner, 1989, ix), metaphors comprise in their essence what is most

³⁰ Our translation of the original "Îmi încercam cu unghia zimții darului poetic. Și încordam urechea s-aud dacă metalul lăuntric sună au nu" (Blaga, 2012, p. 106)/

³¹ Our translation of the original "M-am retras în desișurile mele lăuntrice. În oraș nu mai ieșeam aproape deloc. Îmi era tot mai greu să suport genul uman. Acest gen uman care a fost în stare să înceapă un război atât de incredibil pentru motive atât de stupide! Și tocmai în clipa când din omoplații adolescenței mele trebuiau să crească secretele aripi ale juneței triumfătoare" (Blaga, 2012, p. 161-162).

meaningful in a person's mind and soul, giving an adequate account of what is going on in our inner and outer world.

Din copilăria mea (From My Childhood) is a gentle portrait of a simple day spent at the countryside and of the pure, kind heart of a child. The poet performs his daily duties, leading the geese and oxen to pasture. The nature surrounding him builds a special, fairy-tale like world in which the poet finds a good friend in a scarecrow. He pities it as it is despised by the other children and feels that, by keeping its side, he becomes some sort of a martyr. The calmness of the childhood sunny days and the connection between the childhood purity and the sky, seen as an upper level of consciousness, can be seen in the following spatial metaphor: "When I was lying in the meadow on my back/ with my eyes towards the vault in the clear/ I imagined myself lying with my belly in the sky/ gently resting on my elbows"³².

Ghimpii (Thorns) points to the absolute innocence of childhood as a child cannot see the fact that the right path to be followed is the hardest one. The metaphor of *thorns* points to the fact that some things are ment to always belong to the dark side and simply cannot become good: "I was a child. I remember, I was picking/ once, wild roses./ They had so many thorns/ but I didn't want to break them./ I thought they were buds/ they would bloom"³³.

The poem *Cuvinte către fata necunoscută din poartă (Words for the Unknown Girl Standing in the Gateway)* stands out among the other poems as it contains the impressive metaphor of childhood as a *spring*, seen as the source of everything that is good in the entire world. The poet addresses a girl, asking her to guard the spring: "Be the guardian of my childhood. Of the childhood/ which I am still carrying in me./ It is the only good, the source of everything, through all the seasons/ through all the years/ under all the cardinal points./ You guard, you guard the spring from drying up"³⁴.

Other outstanding metaphors for childhood are *the secret* and *the fire*: "Make sure the secret doesn't go out, the little fire/hidden in the heart of the autumn crocus"³⁵.

Life is seen as a journey of the human being from "flower", which is another metaphor of childhood, to "fruit" is a metaphor of old age. Throughout this journey, a person carries the childhood along the way. It is the only true thing, hidden deep within, that characterizes our real selves: "I, too, once had a back burned by the nettles of the sun/ and bare soles. I remind you of long-gone days/ but don't think that I also spent my childhood/ jumping over fences. No, my childhood is still here./ My childhood is still here today./ And if I were to jump over the gate of autumn/ which I have reached, I would jump with my childhood/ in my veins and in my burnt fists"³⁶.

³² Our translation of the original verses: "Când mă trânteam în pajiște pe spate/ cu ochii către bolta în senin,/ mă nchipuiam întins cu foalele pe cer,/ lin răzimat pe coate".

³³ Our translation of the original verses: "Eram copil. Mi-aduc aminte, culegeam/ odată trandafir sălbatici./ Aveau atâția ghimpi,/ dar n-am voit să-i rup./ credeam că-s muguri/ și-au să înflorească".

³⁴ Our translation of the original verses: "Să fii strajă copilăriei mele. A copilăriei/ ce-o duc încă în mine./ Ea e singurul bine, izvorul a toate, prin tot anotimpul,/ prin toți anii,/ sub toate punctele cardinale./ Tu păzește, păzește tu izvorul să nu se usuce".

³⁵ Our translation of the original verses: "Grijește tu să nu se stingă secretul, micul incendiu/ ascuns în inima brândușei de toamnă".

³⁶ Our translation of the original verses: "Avui și eu odată spatele ars de urzicile soarelui/ și tălpile goale. Îți amintesc zile stinse demult,/ dar să nu crezi că mi-am trecut și copilăria/ sărind pe vremuri zăplazul. Nu, copilăria e încă aici."/

CONCLUSION

From our findings we can conclude, irrespective of the fact that childhood is depicted during war or peace, it manages to keep its magic, being a special state of mind, time and space. Therefore, it provides the perfect time and space to retreat in front of the terror of history. The favourite space, the so-called *locus*, of childhood is the native house or the homeland, the native country. The relationship between the terror of history and childhood refers to binary categories such as ephemeral/eternal, history/eternity, labyrinth/freedom. Remembering childhood is similar to a ritual of recovering an ideal, a mystical time, an *illud tempus/illo tempore*, a time subtracted from duration, a “hierophanic time”. Childhood can be interpreted as a metaphor of the moment before the birth of time, with an immutable space, purged of the effects of passing, of non-exemplary events. The desire of the mature to return to childhood is actually the human desire to place himself/herself in eternity, converting duration into eternal time.

Paul Goma’s autobiographical novel *Din calidor. O copilărie basarabeană. (From Calidor. A Bessarabian Childhood)*, suggestive of a Romanian childhood affected by the war, is mainly impressive in the way it describes the child’s emotions trying to cope with the false rumours about his father’s death in captivity and with the sadness of being forced to leave Bessarabia in 1944. The novel is also impressive in the way in which it describes the family home, childhood games, millenary traditions, as well as the parents and the inhabitants of the native village.

For Goma, *axis mundi* is, from the point of view of time, the childhood, and, from the point of view of the *locus*, the corridor of the family home in Mana, the *calidor*, to which the eternal return of the writer takes place.

As Lucian Blaga is a complex personality, being a poet, a prose writer and a philosopher, his work is the most appropriate to illustrate the way in which childhood during peacetime is evoked both in prose and in poetry. Both in *Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor (The Chronicle and Song of Ages)* and in poems, childhood is portrayed as a luminous time and the native house as the center of the universe.

When discussing the prose, mention should be made of the highly sentimental evocations of the native house, courtyard, surroundings, of the peaceful days when the child was looking at the blue sky, of the portraits of his parents, best friends and teachers, of games played, of childhood adventures, of diseases, deaths, departures and longings.

Blaga’s childhood metaphors are masterpieces of poetry writing: the metaphor of childhood as *the secret* and *the fire* that must be kept at all costs, the impressive metaphor of childhood as a *spring*, seen as the source of everything that is good in the entire world, or the metaphor of childhood as *flower*, marking the first period in life, as opposed to the metaphor of *fruit*, seen as the last period in life.

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Діакону, М. (2024). Згадуючи дитинство під час війни та миру: “З Калідора. Бесарабське дитинство” Паула Гоми та “Хроніка і пісня віків” і вірші Лучіана Блага. *Дитяча література: інтердисциплінарний дискурс*, 1 (1), 53 – 66.

Ця стаття має на меті дати короткий погляд на манеру письменників змальовувати дитинство воєнного та мирного часу. Дитинство має бути найпрекраснішим періодом, але історія вносить свої жорсткі корективи і приносить з собою багато труднощів і болю. Однак навіть за цих нещасливих обставин дитина має магічну силу перетворювати зло на яскравий досвід. Протягом усього дорослого життя терор історії є поштовхом до вічного повернення до Едему дитинства та до улюбленого місця, як правило, до рідного дому. Роман Паула Гоми “З Калідора. Бесарабське дитинство” є гарним прикладом того, як письменник змальовує дитинство під час війни, тоді як, з іншого боку, мемуари Лучіана Блага “Хроніка і пісня віків” є відповідним прикладом того, як письменник розповідає про дитинство в мирний час. Оскільки Блага є одним із найвидатніших поетів Румунії, ми маємо унікальну можливість побачити, як він також згадує дитинство в деяких своїх віршах. Слід зазначити, що зі стилізованої точки зору метафори є найважливішими образами мови, до яких вдаються автори для зображення дитинства.

Незалежно від того, дитинство зображене під час війни чи миру, воно зберігає свою магію, будучи особливим станом душі, часу та простору. Дитинство забезпечує ідеальний час і простір для відступу перед жахом історії. Улюблений простір, так званий локус дитинства, – це рідний дім або Батьківщина, рідна країна. Відношення між терором історії та дитинством стосується бінарних категорій, таких як ефемерне/вічне, історія/вічність, лабіринт/свобода. Згадування дитинства подібне до ритуалу відновлення ідеального, містичного часу. Дитинство можна інтерпретувати як метафору моменту перед народженням часу, з незмінним простором, очищеним від наслідків минулого, невзірцевих подій. Прагнення зрілого повернутися в дитинство – це насправді бажання людини помістити себе у вічність, перетворивши тривалість у вічний час.

Ключові слова: воєнне дитинство; терор історії; дитинство в мирний час; вічне повернення до Едему часу та місця дитинства; прозові та поетичні метафори дитинства.

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