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Communicative Spirit between Writers and Scripts in the Romanian and Hungarian Languages

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Abstract. The paper looks at Octavian Codru Tăslăuanu and Octavian Goga, two major figures of Romanian literature and culture from the beginning of the twentieth century. The relationship that developed between the two, both on a personal and on a professional level, represents a central focus of the discussion, reveled through references to letters, memories, and confessions of the two writers themselves, but also through quoting opinions of László Gáldi and Sámuel Domokos. The two Romanian writers also collaborated with the *Luceafărul* periodical, the importance of which in shaping Goga's literary career is also highlighted, as well as Goga's contribution to transforming the student publication into a veritable literary and cultural forum. Tăslăuanu's concerns for primarily aesthetic, and only secondarily nationalistic criteria in appreciating literary works and as guidelines for the *Luceafărul* are also emphasized, while the paper also outlines the Hungarian reception and literary histocial views on these major Romanian cultural figures.

Keywords: Goga, Tăslăuanu, *Luceafărul,* aesthetic criteria, nationalism.

". . . Whoever is not capable to do his education in the sense of a moral flexibility which shall protect him from sacrifices and surprises should put a distance between himself and this world and to devote himself to loneliness . . ." Octavian Goga

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Continuing Octavian Goga's idea taken from *Crumbles*[1] where morals written at different periods of his life are gathered, we can say that there are different ways of escaping loneliness but one very essential has always been communicating with the likes.

At the beginning of my teaching career, my literary interests guided me towards a work concerning the life and works of Octavian Codru Tăslăuanu, originating from Bilbor-Harghita, a friend of Octavian Goga's, both known for their activity at the *Luceafărul* periodical founded on 1st July 1902 in Budapest. Possessing some interesting material, some of which unpublished, amongst other preoccupations, I had been working for a few years hoping to complete and extend the study on him.

As a state of mind or an intention cannot stay inside for a long time and a state of mind, no matter how authentic it could be, cannot become a "truth" but only in and through communication, I wrote a letter to Sámuel Domokos Dr., University Professor in Budapest, well-known researcher and literary historian, telling him about my intentions and asking him to accept my application to doctoral studies at the Romanian Language and Literature Department whose Head he was at the Eötvös Loránd University Budapest. Amongst others, I wrote to him that "I would be delighted to have you as my scientific coordinator with the thesis on Octavian C. Tăslăuanu provided you accept this unexpected and courageous proposal" (posted on 17 January 1982).

On 25th March 1982, Professor Sámuel Domokos sent me a letter as cordial as possible which began as follows: "Dear Colleague, my answer comes late but as a positive one, though I do not like Tăslăuanu whose untruths about Goga I confuted. He was a passionate nationalist and he hindered Goga's relationship with Ady. I accept your topic on condition it does not refer to Goga. But I propose another topic from the Romanian-Hungarian folk researches, fairy tale anthologies, folk poetry or bilingual materials of which we do not have much. I see that you like folklore and probably you know Hungarian? I like this topic very much and it would be a great success for our relations . . . "

In my response, I thanked him for the precious information given, specifying at the same time that choosing a folklore topic has aroused my attention.

Although the topic referring to the life and especially the activity of O. C. Tăslăuanu and O. Goga did not become a doctoral thesis, I have not abandoned the subject as the present paper proves.

In his books *Octavian Goga* and *Memories from Luceafărul,* O. Tăslăuanu presents us a "little known and little emphasized" (202) Goga but avoiding a sterile

[1] Octavian Goga began in Iaşi on 17th November 1916 his intimate diary entitled *Crumbles from a Fall,* diary that he kept until 26th December of the same year. *Crumbles* includes the poet's morals written in different periods of his life, partially published in *Revista fundaţiilor* (6th year, December 1939) and then in *Tribuna* (9th year, No. 31 (444), 5th August 1965).

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biographism. As he also states, "even though some relationships and influences between Goga's everyday life and his poetry can be traced, I think it is a pure waste of time to reveal the mystery of the poet's sources of inspiration" (77).

Tăslăuanu's writings on Goga written in a balanced but somehow unobjective way are a mixture of biography, literary history and scattered comments of literary criticism.

As in every beginner, Goga found in Tăslăuanu a devoted and loyal friend, and, more importantly, a permanent spiritual stimulant. "His character prone to get discouraged needed this very much" (10) as László Gáldi remarks in his work dedicated to the poet and he continues, "in their conversations which lasted till dawn, Tăslăuanu beamed this active spirit through which he managed to revive Luceafărul after its uncertain beginnings" (10).

Ioan Lupaş's letters reveal that Goga was tormented by pessimism and disappointments having an innate predilection towards melancholy leading him to an intimate-minor poetry in 1903-1904 to which Sámuel Domokos, in his study on Goga adds: "we do not think that these states of mind would have been connected to his conceptions" (61-62)**.** Let us interpret this way, comparing the two statements of Sámuel Domokos, the first referring to Tăslăuanu: "Let us not forget that Tăslăuanu was older having a greater life experience and being more practical than Goga." (62); the second focusing on Goga, "characterized by a profound national sentiment, having firm political convictions, needing no advice from others in this field!" (62).

As we will see, the events of his life contradict the above opinions. The documents prove that it was Tăslăuanu's merit to have guided Goga towards the core of his national and social inspiration. Here is the confession: "I encouraged him as I saw that he found his original sources of inspiration and creation in the rural life" and then "he decided to tune his lyra and sing the pain of the oppressed nation he was part of" (*Amintiri* 18).

In what concerns the poet's inclination towards pessimism, Tăslăuanu claims it not to be of personal nature, "but derives it from the millennial sufferings of our peasantry that we meet in the folk songs and bitterness of the everyday speech" (80). Călinescu, analysing his poetry, remarks a similar idea: "an ineffable of metaphysical origin, an unmotivated pain of an ancient people grown old by the cruel experience of life expressed through ritual wailing conveyed without explaining the meaning" (610).[2]

Tăslăuanu is right, as noticed by several critics and literary historians, when he states that Goga would not have written his beautiful verses had there not been the *Luceafărul***.** He would not have elaborated his programmatic poetry "had there not been a periodical which published what he wanted" (21) and adds*,* "It was

[2] The same quotation can be found in the 1941 edition, page 540.

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Luceafărul that gave Octavian Goga and Ion Agârbiceanu to literature" (21). Tăslăuanu also leaves us this meaningful confession about the most significant poet of the *Luceafărul* periodical: "The shining talent of Goga ornamented the periodical, but even this had the merit to keep the lyra of the poet tuned and wove his glory of rays which crowns his forehead with immortality" (*Spovedanii* 131).

Sámuel Domokos, author of studies on Goga, becomes suspicious, discontent with Tăslăuanu's statement: "Does Goga owe more to *Luceafărul* or the periodical owes more to the poet?" and notes that "more precisely, it can be said: they could not have existed without each other" (62).

Let me make a short digression. Let us suppose *Luceafărul* had not existed, Goga would have found another periodical but it is not sure that he would have found a publisher (let alone a mentor) to whom he could have attached as a Transylvanian as we could see in Tăslăuanu's case. In other words, Sámuel Domokos does not think (deliberately or not) that a periodical (at that time and circumstances, *Luceafărul* but let us not neglect O. Tăslăuanu) could have smoothened the way of a young writer of Goga's talent. We ground our affirmation with a single example (less valuable, let us admit it!): *Familia*, where Eminescu published for the first time, with its publisher Iosif Vulcan—who became his literary godfather as it is known—would it not have helped the future "development" of the poet?

A vigilant observer of the Romanian realities of those times, O. Tăslăuanu, as Goga himself, fought to transform *Luceafărul* from a student publication with minor cultural goals into a literary and cultural periodical which should embrace the general Romanian problem of the time. Concerning the "nationalism" of the periodical, Tăslăuanu specifies, "we have not cultivated a cheap and noisy nationalism but we struggled to raise the cultural level of the readers with serious studies" (*Amintiri* 55-56). Otherwise, László Gáldi sees in Tăslăuanu the one who "had strong but sincere and objective national feelings. He does not avoid Romanian-Hungarian relations… but he studies them with the candidness of a man who loves truth" (34).

Even Sámuel Domokos stated that the publisher of *Luceafărul* "defended the need of the national character of Romanian literature, regarding from the point of view of the Romanians of Transylvania" (65).

In *Memories from Luceafărul*, Tăslăuanu states "the generation of *Luceafărul* has enriched the Romanian literature with the specific Transylvanian art and raised the cultural level of Transylvania", to specify in *Octavian Goga*: "In reality, we did not give birth to a new current but we continued the Transylvanian traditions" (26).

In many articles and notes Tăslăuanu defends the priority of the aesthetic criterion in appreciating literary works explaining its inter-conditioning with the ethical and ethnical factor.

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Seen through the eyes of today's researcher, we can discover contradictions, animosities, debatable opinions in the writings of the publisher of *Luceafărul*, some of these remarked in our paper "Considerations, conceptions and aesthetical, cultural creeds with Octavian C. Tăslăuanu."

Besides these, we mention that the Romanian literature of those years was enriched at the chapter of artistic translations thanks to Octavian Goga, who thus lined up to the tradition of his predecessors, G. Coşbuc and Şt. O. Iosif. Dan Brudaşcu's book, *Octavian Goga—translations from universal poetry* (2005) had to appear so that an order could be made regarding "Goga's detractors and minimalizers" (Brudaşcu)[3] (Hungarians and Romanians as well) who hurried to minimalize some translations from Petőfi and Ady and, in the case of some Hungarian critics and literary historians (like Aladár Schöpflin), who made remarks according to which Petőfi, Ady and Madách would have "decisively" influenced Goga's creations without whom the poet from Răşinari "could not have reached the peaks of perfection and activism-visionarism that he did . . ." Dan Brudaşcu, with an extraordinary moral correctness, also mentions Goga's defenders. One of the Hungarian personalities who had a realistic and benevolent vision defending Goga was Sámuel Domokos who is to be considered "the best-balanced Hungarian hermeneutist of Goga's work" (Brudaşcu). He outlined that the Transylvanian poet has already traced the inner spiritual lines of his original creations long before he started translating the works of Hungarian writers and considered the poets of Transylvanian origin, G. Coşbuc, Şt. O. Iosif, and Goga as real peaks of literary translations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Sámuel Domokos remarks:

> Goga did not become an exceptional poet because he followed Petőfi's poetical programme but because he had the necessary talent to speak in the name of an oppressed people and to be its guide. Without these extraordinary qualities he would have become a mere epigone, whoever the chosen master would have been. He owes his poetical affirmation not to his masters but primarily to his talent. (91)

The moral debt of the poet to align with the multitude, to step beside it, to identify with its aspirations, the noise and the profile of the streets is the most recurrent idea in Octavian Goga's poetry and writings. The same idea was shared by Endre Ady, the one connected to life, the poet who had seen redemption just in Man and Humanity. His song as well as Goga's, being that of the streets, dreaming for all. The mutual respect and love of the two representatives of Romanian and Hungarian spirituality remain examples for future generations.

[3] See also Adrian Botez's book on Goga.

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The one who wrote "I did not have the gift of silence. I could not hide anything, neither good nor bad" (18) or "No one has the right to steal the beauty from our souls" (287), Octavian Goga, and the one who "loved the much suffering world", saying "the real dream is the courageous dream" (14-17), wishing "to belong to someone" (16, 311), Endre Ady in all that they did in thought, acts and creation nowadays belong to both nations.

(Translated by Zsolt Orbán)

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