# Octavian Goga. Lyrical Messianism

**Carmen Mihaela POTLOG**

*Dans cet article, j'ai essayé de souligner que l'attitude messianique est une caractéristique fondamentale dans la poésie de Goga, une expression spécifique de la douleur et de sa protestation, né de la souffrance séculaire des paysans de Transylvanie. La note prédominante du messianisme de Goga est profondément sociale, l'univers lyrique créé par O. Goga dans son premier livre en étant synthétisé, en étant une poésie manifeste, un art poétique de la Transylvanie du début du siècle, quand les masses se dirigeaient vers l'union avec le pays.*

*Le poète est un «apôtre» de la joie et de la liberté qui a suivi la souffrance. Il est le porte-parole de la nation, ne demande rien pour lui-même, seulement la capacité de comprendre et de transmettre les douleurs du peuple, authentiquement. Son vrai but, dit le poète, est de déchiffrer les désirs, découvrir les besoins des gens et de les communiquer exactement. Son idéal artistique a un caractère généralisateur.*

*Mots clés: littérature roumaine, poésie, messianisme, Octavian Goga.*

The fundamental principle of his aesthetic design is to choose poetry as a weapon, in affirming the indissoluble link between art and life in the unalterable belief that the artist is a messenger of his people, a great spiritual shaper.

"I, due to my spiritual structure, always thought that the writer must be a fighter, a pioneer, a great teacher of the nation to which he belongs, a man who filters the pain of the people through his soul and turns it into an alarm trumpet. I saw in the writer a dynamic element, one who raises the masses, a begetter of rebellion. I saw in the writer a sower of beliefs and a sower of victory" (O. Goga, *Mărturisiri literare [Literary Confessions]*).

His poetry seems to reject the meaning of art. This idea is illustrated in *Am fost ... [I was ...]*. The poet defines himself by elimination: "El nu-i canar de colivie / Nici câine paznic de ogradă, / Nici cal de ham, bun de corvadă, / Nici vultur de menajerie..." ["He is not a canary in a cage / Nor a dog guarding the yard, / Nor a harnessed horse, for lugging loads, / Nor a menagerie eagle ..."]. His poetic destiny is that of the missionary: "Am fost logodnicul durerii, / Cobzarul cu aceleaşi strune. / Ce-şi ţese cântecu-nvierii / din stihuri de îngropăciune. // În noaptea mea înviforată, / Drumeţ îndrăgostit de soare, / Am fost o harfă spânzurată / Pe-o straşină de închisoare... // Zidit din lacrimi şi dezastre, / Eu am vestit o lume nouă, /



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Voi mi-ați dat vaierele voastre, / Eu v-am dat inima mea vouă. // În zile lungi de pribegie, / Biet rob lovit de biciul urii, / Eu am luptat de-o veșnicie / Prea mult blestem sub cerul gurii. // Mirarea deci să nu vă prindă / Că azi sub tâmpla mea căruntă / Nu e nici zumzet de colindă, / Nu sunt nici chiote de nuntă..." ["I was the fiancé of pain / The player with the same strings. / Who weaves his song of resurrection / from funeral verses. // In my cold night, / Traveller in love with the sun, / I was a harp hung / On the eaves of a prison ... // Built of tears and disasters / I have heralded a new world, / You have given me your cries, / I have given my heart to you. // In the long days of wandering, / Poor slave hit by the whip of hatred, / I have fought forever / Too much cursing under the roof of my mouth. // No wonder then / That, today, under my white-haired temple / There is no hum by carols, / Nor wedding cheers ..."].

In the poem *Profetul [The Prophet]*, the poet is seen as a bard aware of his social mission, dissatisfied with the social reality, conscious of his messianic calling: "am fost proroc, pe drumul din pustie, / Când zilele mureau nemângâiate, / Am fost proroc, izvor de apă vie, / Toți m-ați băut, de friguri și de sete. // Un vaier surd din veacuri depărtate / Venea la mine-n noapte să mă cheme, / Și mă găsea cu buze-nfrigurate / Din plânsul vostru împletind blesteme. // Hoți flămânzi de pâine și de soare, / În carnea mea eu v-am dospit fiorul, / Și despicând a vremurilor vâltoare / Prin graiul meu vorbea Mântuitorul. // Însângerat v-am răscolit cărare / Cu inima, cu pumnul și cu dinții, / M-am îmbrăcat în neguri și pierzare / Ca să vă dau limanul biruinții... // Când valul meu s-a revărsat pe uliți / O clip-abia, din larga lui năvală, / Din mii de guri, din strigăte și suliți, / I-am auzit cântarea triumfală. // O zgură neagră i-a rămas în urmă. / Ce mic e azi alaiul tuturora! / Străină mi-e biruitoarea turmă / Cu tot noroiul unde-și joacă hora. // Un chiot strâmb îmi urlă la fereastră, / Norocul lui mă mustră și mă doare. / Nu-i visul meu în fericirea vopastră,/ Eu am vestit o altă sărbătoare. // Mă-ntorc  din nou spre culmi de-odinioară, / Ca să nu-mi sfarm o sfântă profeție, / Cu ce mai am din vechea mea comoară, / Lăsați-mă să plec iar în pustie... " ["I was a prophet, on the road in the wilderness, / When days were dying desolate, / I was a prophet, spring of living water / All of you drank me, out of fever and thirst. // A muted lament for long-past centuries / Came to me into the night to call me, / And found me with frozen lips / Weaving curses from your weeping. // Thieves hungry for bread and sun / In my flesh, I've leavened your longing, / And parting the sea of times / Through my tongue the Saviour spoke. // Bloody, I stirred your path / With my heart, my fist and my teeth / I dressed in fog and destruction / To give you the haven of victory ... // When my wave flooded the streets / A moment only in its wide flow, / From thousands of mouths, from cries and spears, / I heard it singing triumphantly. // A black slag remained behind. / How small is today everyone's procession! / The victorious flock if foreign to me / With all the mud where they skip in their round dance. // A false cheer cries at my window / Its good wishes snub me and hurt me. / My dream is not in your happiness, / I have heralded another celebration. // I'm going back again to the heights of yesteryear, / So I



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won't break a sacred prophecy, / With what I have from my old treasure, / Let me go again in the wilderness ..."]. We also identify terms from the lexical field of the noun 'church' in *Post Bellum* "communion", "servant", "banished to heaven" or even in *Cântă moartea [Death Sings]* "Vespers", "resurrects". (Şerban Cioculescu)

The messianic attitude in Goga's poetry is a fundamental feature, a distinctive expression of his pain and protest, stemming from the centuries of suffering of the Transylvanian peasants.

Goga's messianism integrates into the late echoes of romanticism that introduce in literature the prophetic side of the hero, destined to call to battle for social and national freedom. The poet's messianism is a feature that is found in a number of writers that had come before him from the Romanian literature (V. Cârlova, Grigore Alexandrescu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu with *Biblice [Biblical]*, Aleco Russo *Cântarea României [The Song of Romania]*) and universal (Lamartine, Sienkiewicz etc.).

We could see in Goga's lyrics, besides the romantic notes, some symbolist infiltrations, which are achieved through the mysterious, the sibylline and his poetry does not reach the dramas of knowledge which are specific to some of the symbolist poets.

Among the dominant features of his poetry, we identify Poporanist influences in the sense the orientation towards the issues of the peasants and their gloomy life; messianism (the poet feels like a spiritual Messiah of the peasants, wants to suffer for them, to take upon himself the pains of others, assumes the destiny of the one fighting for an Idea; belief in social and national liberation); objectivity in the sense that he makes himself the spokesman for the feelings of others; patriotism – individual destiny melts into the general destiny of a community; visionarism – announces the achievement of the grand historical ideals of the Romanian people.

The predominant note of Goga's messianism is deeply social, in *Rugăciune [Prayer]* there are synthesized the defining notes of the lyrical universe created by O. Goga in his first book, a manifesto poem, a Transylvanian *ars poetica* from the beginning of the century when the aspirations of the masses were aimed at the union with Country.

Without excluding the metaphorical suggestions, the title (a noun) must be accepted in its concrete sense of earnest request addressed to the Creator, suggesting humility before God, as well as love, belief in human growth, in the powers of the individual, involving the meaning of supplication, of assiduous entreaty born of a soul tormented by despair and pain. The poem convincingly marks the boldness with which a young poet assumed the right to speak for the Romanians in Transylvania.

The poem distinguishes itself as an *ars poetica* with a deep patriotic message, with an overwhelming imagistic density. Goga believes that his mission is to vibrate with the calvary of the people, becoming their sounding box. First person verbs and pronouns clearly identify the lyrical ego, betraying his deep involvement: "I fall", "me", "I (...) seek". Nouns in the vocative "Master",



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"Father", the second person pronoun "your" and the imperative verb "order" identifies the referential self, the Deity.

The lexemes from the semantic field of disorientation dominate: "wandering", "tired", "helpless", "chasms" to mark the poet's inability to find his way into art. To emphasize the same idea, the metaphor of the creation path is also used "the path". The language used is largely metaphorical, the poet addressing a pathetic invocation to God, faith being his last hope. The lyrics of the poem build the image of the poet situated at the foot of the deity. The poet is tempted to analyze life artistically, and that is why he asks God to show / reveal to him the true artistic vocation: the spiritual, creative initiation "și de durerea altor inimi / învață-mă pe mine-a plânge" ["and for the pain of other hearts / teach me to cry"] (messianic nuance, suffering for others). The same metaphorical language outlines the poet's artistic creed, to turn himself into a voice of the suffering whole, "în suflet seamănă-mi furtună, / să-l simt în matca-i cum se zbate" ["sow storm in my soul / to feel it struggling in its channel"]. Goga is convinced that poetry has a voice, it is able to translate the sufferings that generated it: "Încheagă-și glasul de aramă: / Cântarea pătimirii noastre" ["gathering its copper voice, / The song of our calvary." The last stanza is a culmination of the feelings that formed the lyrical discourse. Once he understands that he must identify himself with the feelings of "the many", he asks for the help of the deity to lyrically transmute suffering, with slight remonstrative accents.

The poet is an "apostle" of the joy and freedom that followed suffering. He becomes the spokesman of the people, not asking anything for himself, but only the ability to understand and communicate, as authentic as possible, the pains of the people. His true purpose, the poet believes, is to understand the yearnings, the needs of the people and communicate them faithfully. His artistic ideal has a generalizing character: "Nu rostul meu de-a pururi pradă / Ursitei maștere și rele, / Ci jalea unei lumi, părinte, / Să plângă-n lacrimile mele." ["Not my destiny, forever prey / To the cruel and bad fate, / But the sorrow of a people, Father / To cry in my tears."] True art is in the service of the well-being of all people. Striving for the better has a strong messianic character. Suffering can be overcome if there is faith in God and self-confidence: "În pieptul zbuciumat de doruri / Eu simt ispitele cum sapă, / Cum vor să-mi tulbure izvorul / Din care sufletul s-adapă. / Din valul lumii lor mă smulge / Și cu povața ta-nțeleaptă, / În veci spre cei rămași în urmă, / Tu, Doamne, văzul meu îndreaptă." ["In my heart troubled by yearnings / I feel temptations digging, / How they want to disturb the spring / From where the soul drinks. / Tear me away from the tide of their world, / And with your wise counsel, / For ever towards those left behind, / Oh, Lord, guide my eye"]. The direct appeal to the deity is moving. The poet begs to be delivered from "temptations", from slipping into other spheres. The sensitivity suggested by the nouns "heart" and "soul" is put into the service of the people. The social reality is the starting point, "the spring". "My eye" is the projection of the work of the poet



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who wants a spokesman for the people. “Yearnings” is synonymous to aspirations, the power of the word is the messianic force that transforms.

The messianism of Goga’s poetry is built on two dominant semantic fields: of the calvary – “troubled”, “yearnings”, “tears”, “sorrow” and of religiosity – “Lord”, “Father”, “Master”, “temptation”, “soul”.

“This biblical note, often used as a symbol in the poet’s verses, is mainly the artistic expression of some concrete social and historical realities” (I.D. Bălan). For O. Goga art is a divine revelation.

Goga’s poetry has the tragic resonance of the millennium in the enslaved Transylvania. In the tear and in its reflection, the rebellion, this resonance finds its prophetic core. In most works, the tear drops, the sigh is heard, tenderness trembles, moan shivers, all together transmitting the feeling of a great anguish and disturbing sorrow, expressed in repressed weeping, but dignified and remonstrative.

In the poem *Rugăciune [Prayer],* which is an ample invocation where, through words of religious, archaic and patriarchal resonance characteristic of his entire writing Goga gives his artistic expression accents of the people’s misery.

Considered as a “Messianic bard of our suffering”, O. Goga, the poet, is characterized by simplicity, depth, mythicization, intense emotion (love of country, of nature, of God). Both the metaphor and the epithets or symbols are based on the motif of the communion man–nature, the law of harmony and equilibrium. Even if his poetry is built on the aesthetic program of realism (through theme, conflict, subject), the critical nature is transformed into anger or pain, the metaphors gaining a unique character. This transmutation takes a mythical, religious character.

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