

OCTAVIAN GOGA

Octavian Goga was born at Rășinari (Sibiu) in 1881 in a family of schoolmasters. He was educated at Rășinari, then at Sibiu and Brașov. He studied literature and philosophy in Budapest (Hungary). The poet published his early poems in different reviews: *Tribuna* of Sibiu, *The Illustrated Review of Reteag* (Bistrița-Năsăud) and *The Family* of Oradea. In Budapest he was accepted as one of the owners of the famous *The Evening Star* review issued in July 1902 in the capital of Hungary, being one of its most constant contributors. There he published part of his most valuable poems: *The Old Men*, *The Olt*, *The Ploughmen*, *Prayer*. Later on he published these collections of verses in a separate volume, *Poems*, issued in Budapest in 1906. Then other volumes followed: *The Earth Is Calling Us* (Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1909), *From the Shade of Walls*, Bucharest 1913), *Songs without Country* (Bucharest, 1916); the selective collection of the volume *Poems* issued in 1924 in Bucharest was awarded the national prize for poetry in the same year, the last volume issued posthumously was entitled *From Offshore* (Fundatiilor Publishing House, Bucharest, 1939).

A poet of his nation, singer of the national and social aspirations of the Romanian people, Goga was a great journalist and orator of his time. Tudor Vianu appreciated and admired his work, including him in his book *The Art of Romanian Prose Writers'* among the great masters. Goga is also the author of two dramatic plays: *Mr. Notary* and *Master Manole*.

Sincere in his aspiration to support the ideas of his country and of his nation, Goga was also involved in politics. He occupied high official positions in the governments in power in Romania between 1917—1937 and was, for a short time Prime Minister, serving the anti-popular policy of the government.

His friendship with the Hungarian poet Ady Endre, his respect for the latter's work, made him buy from Ady's widow the property at Ciucea, where the poet retired together with his wife, Veturia Goga, and lived a quiet life in the peaceful landscape of the Apuseni Mountains; he also used to meet there his friends who visited him and was buried there in 1938.

Today this place has been turned into a museum complex. The poet's tombstone will for ever be remembered, as Goga is for the Romanian people, the poet of *Our Endurance*, the poet of the people's great national and social ardours in the early 20th century which made possible the achievement of national unity in 1918 and the fulfilment of social dignity. In all the battles crowned by these victories, Goga's poetry was a real impulse and urge.

m. g.

OCTAVIAN GOGA'S JOURNEY FROM RĂȘINARI TO CIUCEA

At Ciucea, where the poet withdrew towards the close of his life memories of him are preserved in a museum, one of the cultural establishments of socialist Romania which pays homage to a lyrical oeuvre of broad social and patriotic inspiration.

"We give high appreciation to Eminescu, and to Goga too — as a writer, for, politically and philosophically we will anyway have to criticize him" said President Nicolae Ceaușescu, underlining, in the spirit of the Romanian Communist Party's Marxist Leninist conception on the capitalization of the cultural heritage, the merits of the poet and the limits of the politician who was Octavian Goga. The contribution made by Goga's verses to the formation of national consciousness so necessary for the creation of the Romanian nation state, the incentive role played by his social poems, the popularity they enjoyed — comparable perhaps only to that earned by Eminescu's poetry — fully prove that Octavian Goga's poetry vented progressive political ideas that the politician did not nurture, often lacking clear-sightedness and intuition as regards Romania's socio-historical evolution.

The literature we inherit from Octavian Goga, his poetry and a good part of his journalistic pieces — so modern by the generosity of the social message, and the genuine patriotic feeling — are the outcome of his often aired outlook on the mission of each scholar to "take part in the new process of moulding man's soul, of the artist, above all, this receptacle of each second."

Wherever he was, at the Louvre, wrapped in admiration for Tizian's *Maiden*, in the gardens of Charlottenburg, or in Scotland, at Albernethy, Octavian Goga's foremost thought and glance were surely directed at the homeland. Life, just like his work, teach us and even seem to warn us that wherever we may be, we, poets, dignitaries or the grass roots, feel bound to our native land. The call of the land with Goga is not a privilege but an order, it is a torment without name or explanation, drive and fatality, lament and concatenation of meanings. Wherever we may be, there are certain dusks when we feel in us the arcane movements of our ancestors who claim to be reborn. The call of the land — feeling and idea, complex and universal, existing before in name but not in body — has found embodiment in Goga's poetry.

Everything Goga experienced along his winding life of poetry pushed him to participation, to adhesion or non-adhesion; and each time he was very keen on stating his exact attitude towards a mobile, dappled and pathetic world of phenomena. Many of his poems or articles feature therefore an epic core and originate in the observance of this fact, of a happening which the poet augments narratively while probing its depth and deep-rooted dramatism. Thus the lyrical effect is actually a dramatic effect since Goga's lyricism is derived from a dramatic state, from a limit situation.

Goga's poetry springs from a lexical compaction whereas his topics are restrained to a few big ideas-obsessions that float from one poem to another, at different affective intensities and timbres. *Prayer* establishes "a cult of the forerunners" and is an awakening to history. The 24-year old poet took upon himself the burden of a millenary kin history and walked at the head of a muted flock of wronged people whose spokesman he proposed to be. This stance-taking and this daring, this identification with the forerunners give the panoramic effect of the poet's messianism.

The image we get every time the poet speaks in the name of his ancestors is one of amplitude and murmur, of revolt

and suffering derived from an impressive mass scene. His verses will always preserve the stride of an implacable funeral march for dignity and the sound of a muted threat similar to the billowy sea at their core. The dead, victims of century-old injustice, rise from their graves and walk their unrest through the graveyards: "This bitter longing now we cannot stave / And melancholy thoughts we can't discard / Of our dead that leave the grave / And wander aimless in the graveyard." (*Meeting Again*) *Prayer*, besides figuring "the cult of the forerunners" also foreshadows the poet's romantic pose. Goga had in himself a romantic vein yet this romanticism with its gestures and generosity was freed from gratuitousness and aestheticism and imbued instead in social force; it was, after all a romanticism grounded on and steered by a well-defined goal.

Goga's social poetry breeds mystery and this mystery is born of the fact that the poet and the homeland, the poet and history with its aspirations have become one. The poet-citizen is not born, but becomes so through a struggle with his self and the permanent temptations of poetry: evasion and intimism. *Prayer* marks the beginning of this struggle for choice, a struggle taking place in the poet's heart between thematic temptations, the lure of pent-up emotions and that of sacrifice. "Extinguish my unbridled passions / For ever silence their behests, / Teach me to weep when I discover / The sorrowing of other breasts."

"The chant of our tribulations" which the poet is ready to intone solemnly, fierily, in fear, shyness or revolt was prepared by a lucid and pathetic choice of the path to be taken, in due awareness of the moral and philosophical superiority of this choice.

The poet's moral duty to join the crowds, to walk with them, to have the same aspirations, to tread amidst the hubbub and dust of common lanes, is the most frequent idea in Goga's poetry and journalistic pieces. A letter to Onisifor Ghibu (printed in the volume *The Notes of a Traveller*) evinces

Octavian Goga's enthusiastic support to the idea of the writer's social mission: "Believe me, the poet's élan will never open the gates of eternity if when the huge waves of the crowd pass under his windows, shouting and cursing for hunger, he withdraws to his secret chambers and, his soul prone to the rhythm of dainty forms he will write a sonnet on Venus of Milo. He is a cynical master, this worshipper of cold marble. He is a broken-winged impotent and not a true artist, for art does not flee from the great pains of life." *Prayer* is the first sign of an inner struggle for commitment, a commitment which the poet wants complete, going down to self-sacrifice. Goga's ideal is a process of superior depersonalization through absorption of the community's suffering and hopes: "Not for my lot for ever bound / To merciless and cruel Fate / But for the sorrows of the world, my father / Let crystal tears my eyes now inundate." The trajectory of Goga's poetry from *Prayer* to *the Prophet* or *I Was* is imbued with his ardour of sacrifice not remote from the romantic idea of the poet-pelican who sacrifices his self, his blood for the fulfilment of the others: "A prophet was I, deathless source / That all did taste for fever and for thirst." (*The Prophet*) Or "You gave me your laments / I gave you all my heart." Goga's great poems, with their bronze-bell sounds are the fruit of a clash between a drive towards interiorization and collective pathos just as the poet's dichotomies will be the material and the ideal, the dirt and the stars, the chamber and the street, the sound and the fury, involvement and isolation, the eternal and the fleeting.

The poet registers his vacillations on the path chosen and makes lyrical notes of his efforts to suppress metaphysical or intimistic élan. Sometimes his accents are clear-cut: "Not in the skies / For ether quells you / Follow this path up to the star / Down there on the dusty lanes / Is where my reflections are."

Sometimes the idea that he could sing false sentiments, that he could simulate his identity with the walk of the crowds

inspires him with parables like that of the rambling traveller who: "He pondered long to understand / That groundless love / Will always have an end / And in his ruthless shove / By dreams his heart was rent." (*I Know a Fairy Tale*) Alternating poetical dispositions are not a matter of different poems, as sometimes they are harboured in only one stanza. Several poems feature one and the same pattern; a contemplative state, a detachment followed by a sudden awakening and accompanied by the recovery of lost energies. This sort of poems is ever more frequent in the volume *Songs without Country* and later on when Goga already has a generous poetical past which he invokes and in the name of which he musters up his pacified energies.

Octavian Goga's poetry at its best is not, therefore, a gift from the gods but the brainchild of a gnostic approach, of a dramatic process of reaching out for essences. The poet starts from nostalgia and biographic impulses (his mother's kiss, the white house on the hill, characters of his childhood, the dramatic thought of a might-be return to his native village), changed into poetical moves. Patriotic poetry and the poet's prophetic voice are grounded on this subjective lyrical data poured unto other chambers of resonance, unto this transcending of the biographic. Goga's messianism derives from other feelings which, by a miraculous expansion of ranges, come to embody longing in suffering, suffering in rebellion and rebellion in prophecy.

The feeling of unrootedness in *The Old Men* or in other poems, the feeling most frequent and poetical with Goga is the essence that turns his capacities sensitive, that generates that unuttered dramatic disposition specific to his poetry, repressed, quenched down and embodied in *the tear*. The range of the Transylvanian village with its characters haloed by memories is projected against the huge screen of a country and a nation and acquires the significance of an eternal *topos* and spirituality, gaining "the enlightenment" perceived by critic Titu Maiorescu: "Patriotism has become one of the sources of Mr. Go-

ga's poetry. Proof is the fact that ordinary scenes in the life of the people are brought to the fore which suddenly acquire, besides their natural meaning and value, a different significance, we could say an extraordinary enlightenment and brilliancy." After 1910, caught in the vortex of politics, Goga writes poetry very seldom and wastes himself on journalism. His articles seem to us today a continuation of his burning poems, with their incendiary lines where irony blends with evocation and anger with lyricism. Several of his journalistic writings, thanks to their ideas, style and literary structure place Octavian Goga next to the greatest Romanian newsmen, Eliade, Eminescu, Arghezi, and Bogza. His articles are samples of genuine literature not only to the extent his sentences incorporate fresh and spontaneous emotions generated by the events of the day but also by their literary quality which made critic Tudor Vianu place Goga, in his *The Art of Romanian Prosewriters*, with the grand masters of Romanian prose.

The call of poetry, of an abandoned vocation breeds in him intolerable feelings of discontent ("... I have never been satisfied with my writing and now the less so, particularly with what I have scribbled of late") which, with the poet's brisker political activities acquire dramatic aspects. ("The ministry, politics, and friends rob me of my time (...) I no longer have the leisure to read as I would like to. I have thought of a schedule: a few hours at the ministry, a few hours for audiences, a few for reading, and, imagine, I laid aside one hour a day for literature. It was impossible to keep to this programme" confessed Goga to I. Peltz).

Starting with the volume *From the Shade of Walls* (and even earlier with the volume *The Earth Is Calling Us*) certain notes indicate that the prophetic voice of the singer of great collective aspirations is dying down. The old subjects bearing on childhood nostalgia or irreversible time are rounded off by a premature complex of old age. The poet has somber visions and is terrified by the idea of losing the mobility of his

spirit: "(So restless once you were / And now so still and calm," or his turning into a dead sea (*Dead Sea*).

He tries without exceptional results to write idylls (*Dusk*) and make philosophy on fecundity and nature's unions in *Carmen*. Forms of dispondent meditation are much more frequent now (*A Ray, My Love*) and in his love poems indisposition goes sometimes to simulated desolation (*You Are Alone*). Goga is ever more concerned with the elegiac side of his temper, develops a strong penchant for lyrical analysis of the poet's condition, asks himself theoretical questions, and requests clarifications and certainties. Resignation, just like generosity in other poems, acquires excessive accents going to despondency: "A sick mariner of our times / My prow is bent and my mast broken." He believes in solitude as a remedy: "Enwrap me once again, you, solitude, Your realm asks for me so oft." Paris puts in him pessimistic notes associated with the terror of the tentacular city which insinuates a timely feeling of death: "Woman, we shall perish softly / For death lines my eyelids," all this accompanied by a philosophy of the cycles and of metempsychosis: ("When we too dust will be, two people will descend at sea / In innocence they'll kiss and 'twined they'd be / Not knowing, poor souls, 'tis our love they hold." His interiorization is similar to that of Eminescu (*Aeternitatis, The Mother of Eternal Venus*) by pondering on love topics, misogynism (*Your Letter*) down to the direct taking over of Eminescian motifs (the lake, the fir-tree forests). A good many poems are crossed by old tunes where the poet once again claims to be the end of a long concatenation of "deathless dead" and these lightnings confirm and increase the dramatism of this struggle with the self. *You Come with Me*, besides the terrible images of previous poems (the heart's tolling, burning hatred, praying hands, the announcement of the justice-making time of resurrection) features and additional dramatism deriving from the feeling of loss and the effort to redeem old values of his own poetry. The ancestors are invoked again and now this call has the meaning of a cry after help: the poet seeks in them

existential moral strength: "Dwell with me for ever and a day / Brothers in soul and in the fiery heart / Your voice has died and broken'll be the clay / When weary life has driven us apart."

You Come with Me seems to solve the specific contradiction in Goga's poetry between eternity and transience, between lastingness and fleetingness. The same ancestors who fortify his spirit and keep alive the torch of rebellion also help him mingle the aspiration after eternity with the secret fear of being the singer of ephemeral feelings: "With me do come and tread / The many and the kinless / Who in their heart have bred / Eternity's impress."

Octavian Goga's social and patriotic poetry follows its compulsory path, materializing in the threatening call of *You Come with Me* just as the other facet, interiorization, will find an expression in the poem *From Offshore* whose value comes from a serene attitude, a moderate verb and calm prosody. No trace here of loud tones, powerful gongs and brass noted in patriotic or social poems. Maturity of spirit and resignation, like an incredible light, announce something that looks like the poet's rising to the skies: "I soar . . . Down there in the deep / I see life's round dance / Ancestral tunes spring up and leap / That none like me will better keep." Here we discover a sort of detachment from the world with which the poet assimilates himself, a detachment from this world with the superiority of fulfilled obligation and sacrifice.

Critic Mihail Dragomirescu said once that "Goga's poetry, limited to passing requirements, became obsolete with the achievement of the national ideal." Beyond the fact that the national ideal is a permanent trait, Goga's poetry is an eternal

lesson that teaches us not love of the homeland — for this cannot be taught but can be beautified and freed from mistakes, though — but the fact that dedication and sacrifice really exist, teaches us our duty as a new generation to better do for the homeland what the ancestors did well, and other wonderful things like dignity and courage, compassion and truth, generosity and ardour. Above all, Goga's verses are an original expression of Romanian lyricism, a lyrical attitude and an irrepeatable sensitivity similar to that of all great poets who created trends, bred works and imitators. The world, tells us Octavian Goga, is made for poetry, for utterance and the poet must reorganize it, that is give it a meaning by utterance: "I did not have the gift of silence. I could not hide anything, good and bad alike. I was sure that it was a pity to fall upon my inner self, that silence was a sort of theft." "Goga was so made as to utter the truth, to release words. "Well, you see, I feel much better, I have confessed the truth, I have shouted it unto all directions, I have called people to gather around me, to show them the truth, so that they can see it. "In other words, Goga's poetry is not a written word uttered for great multitudes gathered in big plazas or on battlefields, and then jotted down on paper. „His written word gets imprinted like a seal on the mind of those who understand him. His spoken word burns like the flames of a torch in the wind. His winged verb enchants and persuades," said the great speaker Delavrancea about Goga's powerful vocables. The poet's vocabulary made up of words-concepts (sorrow, passion, frigth, curse, call, land, lightening, toil, resurrection) clad in new poetical arrays, is rhetorical though its result is not in the least rhetorical because words are always on a par with the feelings express-

ed, because there is a perfect identity between the word and its affective, philosophical and moral meaning. Thus, the path of life and poetry taken by Octavian Goga acquires an inner meaning; it is the road of interior search just like the road taken by a poet should be. It is this inner passion for opposite urges that has made Goga be called a Poet and by this his option for the poetry of the crowds increases its value.

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There are people who think that Goga was born at Ciucea and even we ourselves or others who have learned from our literature books Goga's date and place of birth, sometimes forget that he was born at Rășinari, near Sibiu. Such is the close relation of his heart with these lands in the Apuseni Mountains, midway between two big Transylvanian cities — Cluj-Napoca and Oradea. Goga was born at Rășinari though, and his life road from Rășinari to Ciucea, a diagonal in Transylvania, was a long and winding one, with ample flights and hurried stops. On his way to Ciucea the poet halted to complete his education in Sibiu and Brașov, Budapest and Berlin, or in Bucharest for literary and political affairs. He was held in the Seghedin prison for his ideas and revolt, crossed Russia and the northern countries in disguise in order to join, in Paris, the group of Romanians fighting, by way of diplomacy, to win national unity. He made politics in Bucharest and won great dignities — he, who had once said that he would always be so young as not to crave for a place at the head of the table. He made mistakes out of good faith — because he was a great poet, — not willingly — because, again he was a poet and therefore, generous. He visited the great cities of Europe and other bigger or smaller cities of the world, he walked up and down their streets, tread upon the mosaics at the Vatican, visited the

museums of France, put up in a Scottish castle, and at Marienbad. And all this long and winding road was to end in rest at Ciucea.

Octavian Goga's journey to all these places and many others was very contradictory in details but on the whole just as firm as his very life and work.

At Ciucea, towards the close of his life, we find Octavian Goga, at peace, in quiet and reconciled with the serenity of the first day at Rășinari, looking far away into the future.

A Romanian message most compact and well conveyed, Ciucea reminds us by the poet's presence on the great roadends where one stops to rest after a false defeat with the feeling of a secret victory. Ciucea was not a haven or if it was it was the haven of a wounded soldier. All things bear specific insignia, the armchairs and sofas in the castle are soft, the silent park has benches under the luxurious chestnuts. There, on the sloping alleys, everything must be done soundlessly, slowly as a soldier returned from battlefield moves. The gentle sloping alleys are made for the same unhurried steps and for sound thoughts that go deep down. Ciucea received the poet-citizen with due consideration and gave him rest as was fit for a winner.

The house of Ciucea which we use to call a castle in order to be on a par with the spirit of the man inhabiting it, has, like any castle, its own story. It begins with the purchase of the manor from Ady's widow and ends with the erection, on a mound near by, of the finely mosaic mausoleum by the care of Mrs. Veturia Goga. Chance has so arranged things that Goga's eternity at Ciucea acquires symbolical meanings for Transylvania. Two representatives of Romanian and Magyar spirituality, Goga and Ady met at Ciucea, on the common territory of friendship and poetry. We do not know whether the pinnacle marking the poet's eternal rest is the loftiest;

surely it is not the loftiest of all the homelands' peaks but it is so well chosen and so tall that you know at once that the Poet sees the whole land from there and is contented that even after death he has not ceased to be one with the country. The story of the castle does not actually end with the mausoleum or the new cultural dimensions acquired by the Castle of Ciucea turned into a museum. Simply because it is not a story about death but about immortality. If you ride at night from Cluj-Napoca to Oradea and stop at Ciucea, where the waters of the Criș branch out into three tributaries subject to a magnetism originating under the rocky hill that absorbs them right in front of Goga's house, you will see light in the windows and think the poet is there working in his ground-floor room, or looking for a book in the library upstairs. You can stop at the castle's gate and wonder how true this impression of lit windows is; or perchance the Poet is still in there, alive and kicking. And you may even perceive his shadow behind the curtain in the lit room, passing to and fro.

At Ciucea you will discover the beauty of the Apuseni Mountains in the collections of the castle-now-museum as well, where you can admire art treasures. And above all, you can distinguish the sound of the poet's footsteps, weary with the lifelong road covered from Rășinari to Ciucea. This sound we have tried to put into words and pictures with the feeling that we are in duty bound to pay homage to the poet whose verses have always inspired us, to the man whom the Cluj University awarded with the title of "princeps poetarum pro unitate totis daco-romanicae nationis eluctatum", he who has found his home and eternal peace not far from Cluj, at Ciucea.

MIRCEA GHIȚULESCU

I was born with my fists clenched, my soul ready for revolt from the first moment, the most powerful feeling that has guided my whole life and which has also bred my literary credo.

I have so oft abandoned the sweet coolness of the Olympus to descend into the arena of passions and daily suffering. I have always believed that a pure soul, no matter where it may linger, will shine its light like a candle in the darkness of a cell . . . I have always believed that honest daring bred in beauty-bound souls should lead to the great workshop of life where the forces of a people are moulded.

In the life of struggling peoples writers have always been the avant-garde starting battle. Their writing is the enchanted spear that darts forth the aspirations of a nation (. . .) They are the representatives of the most advanced faith and their stand should reveal the ideal stand of a people.

OCTAVIAN GOGA

One often returns wounded and covered by dust while home the temptation of soft cushions and the delicate smell of a rose in a glass are ready at hand. Nonetheless, there, in the dusty lanes the thoughts and hopes are sown which breed urges to change the world's foundation.

I for one, thanks to my frame of mind, have always believed that writers must be fighters, trail-blazers, great teachers of their nation thanks to their spirit, like true bugles.

I am for a militant type of literature. The Romanian writer must strike free of his isolation. Society is waiting for him and only when he has completed his true mission in society will he have a civil status.

OCTAVIAN GOGA

An artist's soul is a receptacle of the suffering of the surrounding people until the moment he feels himself overwhelmed by a great suffering. From that moment his work will no longer reveal the cries of other people but his own tears.

The life flowing before me calls me, torments my heart and makes my temples hot. Its problems agitate me, its cry troubles me, its war gives me no peace. It is in vain that I pull my shutters and close my window, life's harsh fingers rap at my window and tear me from the serene peace of eternal art.

Storms toss your soul as if it were a boat prey to the billows and you see only one port that could spare you the danger: your faith. Of course this is not the life programme of small triumphers (. . .) They speak only for themselves and are good at speculating on their silence.

OCTAVIAN GOGA

Patriotism has become one of the sources of Mr. Goga's poetry. The proof is the description of ordinary situations in the life of the people which win instantly, besides their normal value and destination, a significance, we could say an illumination and extraordinary brilliancy.

TITU MAIORESCU

Without ever being an elegiac or sentimental poet, Mr. Goga is the singer of his people's sorrows, and while not falling prey to patriotism, he is the poet of the people's hopes.

SEXTIL PUȘCARIU

His written word gets stamped on the mind of those who understand it like a princely seal.

BARBU DELAVRANCEA

He will be a local poet in the loftiest and deepest sense of the word and will become one of the national poets not by starting from general theories or feelings but from uncircumscribed love of his home, of his land (. . .) of his Olt realm and his Transylvanian Country.

NICOLAE IORGA

Unity of temper, original expression, architectural science, observation of topic details, psychological discernment — all this together, beyond the finalism of the Semănătorist literary group offers a special place to the Transylvanian bard in the panorama of Romanian poetry.

EUGEN LOVINESCU

Goga's poetry lives with us today as it lived yesterday and will live tomorrow since it is not only the credo of a fighter but above all the song of a genuine poet, a song of manly expression and rare power of suggestion, a specific rhythm and melody, a poetic verbiage full of substance and pure folk gusto, representative for a whole nation.

ION PILLAT

Goga's Transylvania is a mythic realm, similar to Cantemir's and Sadoveanu's Moldavia, to Eminescu's wondrous Dacia, being though a fettered land, a captive Eden.

DUMITRU MICU

The so-called pure poems fell into oblivion, as well as the presupposed expression of a false "human eternity", instead there lives the emotional, actual and perennial social and patriotic poetry of Goga, his moving love and merry-making songs.

ION DODU BĂLAN