

A PROBE INSIDE THE POETIC FORM OF MYSTICISM OF SLOVAK ROMANTIC MESSIANISTS

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ABSTRACT

The Slovak Romantic Messianism is perceived by us as a phenomenon growing from a specific current epochal situation relating to a relatively rich tradition, which existed in the Slovak cultural context already in previous historical periods. By considering the characteristic features of production, its existence was often relativised. Nevertheless, it represents an important testimony of a concrete epoch. Its artistic implementation (perhaps today more than in the past) is being well appreciated, thanks to its interesting form and to its expressive and narrative strength or value. By focusing our attention on its expressive and thematic means, it is possible to prove that the authors tried to mediate a mystical experience to the readers. As mystagogues, they introduced and initiated the readers to the mysteries of God's plans aiming at transformation of this world. In this sense, through their literary production, they invoked and prayed God to give them a chance to live a direct mystic experience in the reality. By pursuing this purpose, they filled their poetry with curious archaisms and neologisms (the so-called self-creation of language). They gave way to a speculative etymologism and poetical forms. Generally, they were syncretically styling poetical shapes. And they often exploited experiments or complex strophic structures.

KEYWORDS

Romanticism. Messianism. Messiah. Redemption. Nation. Mysticism.

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The Slovak Romantic Messianism, with its expressional and thematic means, is perceived by us as a phenomenon growing from a specific current epochal situation relating to a relatively rich tradition, which existed in our cultural context already in

previous historical periods. By considering the characteristic features of production, its existence was often relativized also by contemporary authors in the period of origination and operation of this movement. Its special poetics did not enjoy positive echoes at the very beginning.

From today's perspective, messianistic thoughts appear as a very specific element of their epoch; nevertheless, the texts in which these thoughts are reflected, were almost unknown to people living in that historical period (and even when they were known, they were often ignored or refused). For this reason, to a smaller extent, they were recorded in the spiritual life of the Romantic generation but did not play such an important role in it. If we try to return to messianistic thinking (in the image of Slovak Romanticism) the real position it deserves, then we must take into account that its influence on epochal (and not only epochal) large collective consciousness does not appear too strong (Goszczyńska 2005, 270). As a paradox, Slovak literary Messianism is more appreciated by our contemporary epoch. Today, it is being given more attention in the expert audience environments. Its artistic and ideal message is exalted and its developmental merit in the history of Slovak literature is re-evaluated. It is once again a subject of reading and it paves the way to supertemporal communication.

The conditions for the origination of literary Messianism in the context of Slovak Romanticism were very favorable. After the 1848–1849 Revolution, the Slovak national revival (generated by the forces that were pushing forward the European continent back then) fell into a deep crisis, with stagnation and disillusion because of the failure to implement the expected plans. Despite the undeniable efforts of the main representatives, the vision of a freer Slovak future remained unfulfilled. The search of new ways for affirming the Slovak ideals was practically vanished under the pressure of the absolutism of the government.¹ In the territory of current Slovakia there was another solid clue, which played a relevant role. The whole romantic generation was building its bases on it: it was the faith in God and in the Divine Providence – the sanctification of national goals as a divine scope in a larger context.

The representatives of the national revival were strongly connected to their religious faith; not by chance, many of them were priests. Faith and God inspired and supported the poetical production of a wide generation of Romantic messianists like Michal Miloslav Hodža (1811–1870), Samo Bohdan Hroboň (1820–1894), Mikuláš Dohnány (1824–1852), Jozef Podhradský (1823–1915), Peter Kellner Zábaj Hostinský (1823–1873) and partially even Pavol Hečko (1825–1895), Pavol Dobšínský (1828–1885), Samuel Ormis (1824–1875), Viliam Pauliny-Tóth (1826–1877), etc. (many of them with connection already to their pre-revolution trends). Let's remind the consternation, scandal, and complaints caused by the works of Hroboň and Hodža sent to the *Concordia* almanac in 1857 (despite the fact that they were transmitted

1 We are thinking about Bach's absolutism, which the Historians place more or less in the years 1849–1860.

on direct request of its editors Jozef K. Viktorin [1822–1874] and Ján Palárik [1822–1870]).

By analyzing the literary production of Slovak romantic messianists, we start from the understanding of the concept of Messianism as a mindset that had its origin in Judaism and – after gradual deepening – became one of the characteristic signs of Jewish spirituality. Its main essence resides in the expectation of the arrival of a human and supernatural being on earth, which shall start the era of salvation. It is about “faith in the salvation of man, nation or the whole mankind through the Messiah elected by God, i.e. the Anointed One” (Dupkala 2003, 7). Here, we have a chance to observe one of the basic features of Messianism – the aspect of “election”, because the Jewish nation is elected by God. This concrete aspect, in later centuries, will suit the spirit of the national revival epoch and the development of national ideas.

In linguistic terms, the word “Messianism” came from the biblical word “Messiah”, from the Hebrew “Mashiach”, Greek “Christos” – and it means “the Anointed One”. “The expression is a noun derivation from the verb ‘mashach’ meaning ‘to anoint’. In most of the cases, it is anointment with oil. By analyzing the number of passages in which this element is reported, we notice that it is an important religious act. Anointment with oil is actually consecration, i.e. designation for ministry and for serving God” (Heller 1994, 20). Later on, the act of anointment was carried out with the aim of limiting an exceptional spot or a sacred stone as a symbol or localization sign of a concrete place to be used for supernatural contacts with the higher sphere. Then, it started to be gradually connected with the ritual of consecration of ceremonial elements; only later in time, it began to be used for symbolical marking of an extraordinary and elected being (Somolayová 2010, 615–616).

“The prophets present the Messiah – first of all – as the ideal king. Then, with the painful crises of the exile and destruction of Israel, Messianism acquires a new characteristic; it becomes more spiritual. The prophets mediate a new image of an eschatological sovereign sitting on the throne of King David. They don’t see the Messiah only an authoritative ruler, but as a mediator, a pastor, and a peacemaker” (Poliaková 2008, 19).

“Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair” (Is 11:6–8). The condition for this “heavenly life” is the right relationship with God and the right knowledge of God. This thesis is taken back by messianistic authors, who believe that the Slovak people can reach their redemption not through concrete actions, but as a blessing “from above”, within the frame of a renovated Pan-slavism.² The aim was supposed to be reached through

2 Polish Messianism elaborates also the thesis of eligibility of the nation (of course, the Polish nation), to be considered as key factor for the revival of the entire world. In the context of Polish literature, Messianism has a dominant position and was not refused by contemporaries.

direct divine intervention – with the descent of an abstract, ideal being – Messiah. In this way, the national revivalism acquires a utopian character.

In the context of Slovak literary Romanticism, Messianism has been, so far, an object of research prevalently with regard to the production of its two main representatives: Samo Bohdan Hroboň³ and Michal Miloslav Hodža⁴. At the beginning, its production resounded only in Slovak creation of literary realism: “The character of Hurban’s Holan⁵ (from Vajanský’s epic work ‘Flying Shadow’ [Letiace tiene]) goes so far that he is abhorred by the author himself. In him we feel greatness of spirit and true prophetic essence” (Krčméry 1976, 235). He is also target of satyr and parody in some literary works (e.g. in the already mentioned Vajanský’s *Flying Shadow*, but also in Vajanský’s *Kotlín*, in Ferienčíková’s short story *The Philosopher and the Poet* [Filozof a poeta], in Kukučín’s *Sacrifice* [Obeta]). Only later on does he receive some respect in Kukučín’s novel *Lukáš Blahosej Krasoň*. Romantic Messianism was taken into consideration by Slovak literature rather than by literary history. Only in later years, romantic Messianism stops being targeted by literary parodies and gets out of the field of view of belle-lettres (Čepan 1973a, 97).

Michal Eliáš has very precisely and concisely described the interest of literary science and history in Slovak romantic Messianism: “There is no satisfactory knowledge about literary history of the features of the literary current called Messianism” (Eliáš 1973, 5). In the past, scholars used to write more about the life of our romantic messianists and less about their literary production. The figure of the main representative of Slovak Messianism (Samo Bohdan Hroboň) was treated for the first time by Svetozár Hurban Vajanský in a necrologue reporting facts about his life events: “Hroboň put an end to his active life and was cast away to a silent and beautiful shore; but he stayed true to his ideals, pure as mountain crystal; the fire burning inside him did not disappear, despite his fatal anachoretic retirement, but he remained faithful and strong in what he has lived for” (Vajanský 1956, 331).

The approach of Slovak literary history in the assessment of messianists’ production is more precisely defined by statements concerning Samo Bohdan Hroboň: “Lost in countryside solitude, he was more and more deeply immersed in his visions and thoughts. His poetry – which resonated with the metal sound of the Old-Testament prophets – got stuck in dark apocalyptic labyrinths...” (Vlček 1953, 192) Štefan Krčméry sees in Hroboň a special creative potential. “As far as Hroboň is concerned, people believed that he stands highly above the average, but he tends to wander around” (Krčméry 1976, 234). Critics and scholars often based their judgments on simplified interpretations of the issue of Slovak Messianism: “It is not at all correct to agree with the depreciating verdicts by some contemporaries and then by part of positivist oriented science” (Mráz 1948, 174). A similar situation – as for the

3 Samo Bohdan Hroboň was a Slovak folklorist, translator, linguist and poet.

4 Michal Miloslav Hodža was a Slovak linguist and poet.

5 Holan is the name of literary figure.

assessment and consideration of Messianism – is observed also in the 1960's in Slovakia.

Only Oskár Čepan tried to implement a more systematic approach to research on the conception of Slovak romantic Messianism. He observed the great influence of Messianism in the romantic literary milieu and he tried to define it from a temporal point of view, according to the theories of his time.

It originated from old buds immediately after the revolution, in the depressive circumstances of the 1850's. Through literary activism of Samo Bohdan Hroboň and Jozef Podhradský, this literary orientation experienced its patriotic Romanticism. Covered by the mantle of literary realism and piously tolerated by the main leaders of the new generation, it humbly kept acting until the period between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Coincidentally, in the first decades after the revolution, it took up not only the role of guardian of the ancestral traditions of romantic "spirit", but also the role of predictor and announcer of the expected cataclysmal political transformations – although in a veiled form (Čepan et al. 1965, 93).

During the 1970's, Čepan's opinions about the issue of Slovak Messianism began to significantly change, thanks to his systematic research: "It existed since the very beginning of the Romantic movement. Therefore, it is not an additional product of the post-revolutionary depression and disappointment left by vanished hopes" (Čepan 1973a, 98).

As for the development of romantic thoughts in Slovakia we can see two resultant forces: on the one hand, the pragmatic and thematically accommodating romantic programme affirmed mainly by Štúr and Hurban; and on the other hand the messianistic uncompromising "unity of spirit" represented by Hodža and Hroboň... Both these currents did exist from the very beginning of Slovak Romanticism (Čepan 1973b, 139).

The first type of Slovak Romanticism, the so-called national Romanticism, in the track of Hegel (objective realism) "subordinated art to the interests of the national spirit and to practical aspects of social activity (pragmatism)" (Čepan 1993, 74). The second type of Romanticism, messianistically oriented, in the name of Schelling (subjective idealism) "absolutized the poetical aspect of the interpretation of reality. In compliance with the law of identity between individuals, nature, the universe and the Absolute, in the field of art it found a synthesis of all things that are separated in the field of nature and of history" (Čepan 1993, 74).

The early monolith opinion about the romantic period (represented by "Štúr's followers" or the so-called "Štúr's school")⁶ was interrupted and replaced by a pluralistic model of the Slovak literary Romanticism, with two parallel ideal forms. Slovak Romanticism did not show only two different aspects in the relation between

6 Ludovít Štúr (1815–1856) was a Slovakian revolutionary politician and writer, leading figure in Slovak romanticism.

“spirit and objectiveness”, but – in simplified terms – it included two versions of romantic mindset: the first one had a national and pragmatic character; and the second one was metaphysical and messianistic.

Nevertheless, Cyril Kraus does not really agree with Čepan’s outputs. According to Kraus, Čepan – in his more recent works – does not show an objective point of view about the Slovak Romanticism and he is consciously misrepresenting it. In the past – for ideological reasons – the national type of Romanticism was highly appreciated (i.e. pragmatic Romanticism, according to Čepan’s terminology), whereas Messianism was mostly evaluated with negative attributes. Čepan not only emancipated messianistic Romanticism, but he also elevated its value, by limiting the significance of the so-called pragmatic or national-oriented Romanticism (Somolayová 2010, 627–628). Kraus warns that Čepan overestimated the concept of Messianism in its relationship with traditional national Romanticism; and consequently set Messianism to an equal position as that of the so-called pragmatic or national-oriented Romanticism. According to Kraus, the mutual alignment of both lines looks like a partial obscuration of the national-oriented Romanticism. Kraus doesn’t agree with Čepan’s “denial of spirituality” in the analysis of national-oriented Romanticism. Kraus clearly states that “spirituality is present also in the ‘pragmatic Romanticism’, but it has a different character, and it is manifested in a different way than by ‘romantic Messianism’” (Kraus 1999, 13).

Slovak literary science is not too inclined to accept a pluralistic model of Romanticism, both because the term “Štúr followers” indicates the whole generation of Slovak Romanticism and because of the “unwillingness to accept the romantic Messianism in the Slovak context represented a much more solid phenomenon than what has been so far acknowledged” (Somolayová 2010, 629). In his later research, Kraus openly admits and recognises the presence of the messianistic current within the frame of Slovak Romanticism. “Poetry of Slovak messianists – essentially visionary – constitutes a specific current within Slovak literary Romanticism” (Kraus 2007, 341). Nevertheless, it is not possible to state that Kraus is perceiving it as exactly equivalent to the national-oriented Romanticism. Interpretatively, he mainly focuses on texts that represented the core literature of the period of Slovak Romanticism; and he declares that Messianism is not really part of this core (Kraus 1999, 13). An excursus of the perception and classification of Slovak literary Messianism in the national history of literature shows that the messianistic production remains part of a vivid debate within Slovak literary history, thanks to its specificity.

The Messianists based their production on an already existing tradition from Renaissance and Humanism, notably Jakob Jakobeus⁷, and – later – also Ján Kollár⁸. Indeed, even Ján Kollár was inspired, amongst other things, by the messianistic orientation of the Slavic philosophy of his epoch (mainly Polish) and by Herder’s

7 Jakob Jakobeus (1591–1645) was a Slovak writer, historian and poet.

8 Ján Kollár (1793–1852) was a Slovak writer, classicist and pre-romantic poet.

“glorious message” about the special position (and mission) of the Slavs in future (Dupkala 2003, 42–43).

Slovak Messianism was theologically motivated and affirmed the idea of a Christian Slavism – correlation and interpenetration of Christianity and Slavism, destined to guarantee a humanising progress of mankind. This idea is expressed through a penchant for religious mysticism, fatalism, and visionariness. It creates a parallel between the suffering of Christ and the suffering of the Slovak nation. The core of this thought and approach was formed notably in the so-called Levoča school; and it is designated with the term “Levoča asceticism” – with a total affirmation of the spiritual principle at the detriment of the objective and material aspect. The development of the messianistic element is related to this. The main messianistic motifs in their artistic shape were for example: the image of a cursed country (sleeping nation or ill nation); the need of defining a hero, a liberator, and a saviour; frequent allusions to Popolvár as the youngest and the weakest Slavic brother (a possible direct identification of the “small and weak” Slovak nation); and there is also another strong recurrent motif: the predestination to accomplish a great heroic act that shall bring a radical change for the world, on the basis of Christian and humanistic principles (Kamenčík 2015, 114).

In this context, we cannot forget that the messianists did not completely separate from the romantic source. They were also often using elements and motifs of folk literature – even with regard to new circumstances of their time. They would take folkloric conceptions of the hero from fairy tales, and they would use them to describe the Messiah, regardless of the degree of blasphemy or sacredness, in the sense of fulfilment of the redemption-related mission. In this way, in their poetry the implemented also Slavic mythology and Pagan divinities (as regular figures present in the poems).

Probably, the polemic opinions and debates concerning the production of Slovak literary messianists have their origin in the mere form of such production. The detachment from “world objectivity” is coded in the poetic plan. The illusive pan-spirituality is shaped through the selection of imagery elements referring to the spirit itself, not just to create a suitable atmosphere, but also to mediate a mystical “experience” – perceived by the authors as real soundness. They reach this effect by filling their poetry with curious archaisms and neologisms (the so-called self-creation of language). They give way to a speculative etymologism, poetical forms. Generally, they are syncretically stylizing poetical shapes. And they often exploit experiments or complex strophic structures.

Vlastimil Kovalčík notes that, in an experimental epoch (end of the 1850’s), Samo Bohdan Hroboň worked with words based on the principle of the associative grid; and – in doing this – he applied proceedings that are demonstrably anticipating Velimir Khlebnikov (word formation, magic of numbers, number formation, sagacity or meta-language). He states that poems like *Obraz* [Picture] or *Rozpejánok* [Small song] didn’t have any analogy in the world poetry of that time. The same applies

also with regard to the so-called absolute poems, where the author is not interested in the conceptual and logical meaning of the words, but in their acoustic (musical) and graphical (figurative) usage. Even in this case, Hroboň anticipated the German poet Christian Morgenstern who wrote such poems at the end of the 19th century. Morgenstern was immediately publicly known, whilst Hroboň was kept under silence. This initiative matches the proceedings of the current so-called concrete poetry (Kovalčík 2010, 546–547).

Such poetical expressive tools are found to some extent in practically all messianists; and we should consider that they resulted from a different basis and scope than later artistic avant-garde. Their aim was not really re-evaluation, denial, or the spreading of irritating debates about the existence and the function of poetical art. The messianists were rather “researchers of the expression”. They had different priorities: “addressing God” and involvement of the national cause in God’s plan. The poetic language became a means of dialogue with God. Probably, just because of this fact, it was not accepted in its simple form inspired mainly by folk literature.⁹

The “mysticism of language” is probably manifested in the most significant manner in Samo Bohdan Hroboň. On the basis of a detailed research, Lubica Somolayová identifies him on the axis of professionalism – magic. She considers his orientation close to a hallucinating language that gets formed involuntarily and unintentionally. It is a sort of language generated in a modified state of conscience, trance or mystical revelations. It is like an effort to create a perfect universal language of the Slavs (Somolayová 2008, 200–201). By the means of this specific language, it is possible to invoke God and present Him personal pain as the pain of the whole nation, by praying Him to put in place effective remedy. These are the basic motifs that are resonating not only in his poetry but also in other authors, in different versions. In the concrete case of this author (as well as in other messianists) the range of recipients is quite limited. Moreover, there is also another relevant factor playing a key role: the large volume of the messianistic compositions (e.g. a composition by Michal Miloslav Hodža called *Matora* [according to the author, the family along the maternal line – P. K.] from 1853–1857 contains 20.400 verses).

The poets often evoke the mystical atmosphere as a positive change in the course of history. We can prove it through the verses of a Hroboň’s poem called *Ária kajúca* [Penitential Aria]. By means of the narration of personal suffering, the lyrical subject reflects the suffering of the whole “cursed” Slovak nation – tormented by an abysmal eternal darkness, as in a prison full of lamentations. The lyrical subject regrets his sins and responds through adoration – „Ach! spomni precaj, Otec milosti“ [“Oh! Don’t forget, Father of Grace”] (Hroboň 1991, 161), „učiň si i mňa i rod môj svojím“ [“may I and my house be Yours”] (Hroboň 1991, 164) – in order to achieve change:

9 The romantic messianists did not renounce to inspirations from folk literature; to a lesser extent, they exploited its poetics and took up some of the motifs of folk literature (mainly the motif of cursing, heroism, and heroic acts).

„Zmeň ma na svetlo, na hudby znenia,
vyveď ma mrežou z temna väzenia“

[“Change me in light, in music playing,
remove the grid and get me out of the darkness of this prison”] (Hroboň, 1991, 162).

The author maneuvers classical mystical figurativeness based on sensory perceptions. Thus, lamentation (as a negative auditive sensation) and darkness (symbolically representing human unconsciousness) lead the reader to a new experience to be directly felt in real life. Light becomes a symbol of knowledge. Music shows its perfect harmony and is capable of furnishing proofs of the states of beatitude that can be achieved by human beings and that are directly related to mystical autopsy. Perhaps, also because of this, the title of the poem refers to the musical genre of aria. Even other messianists show this kind or artistic enjambments. E.g. Hodža denotes some of his poems with the neologism “pejan” (*Pejan ranný* [Morning song], *Pejan slovenský* [Slovak song]). They are a sort of hybrid creation, made up of chants, odes, and prayers. But we can also mention other poets like: Viliam Pauliny-Tóth, Mikuláš Dohnány, Peter Kellner-Hostinský, etc.¹⁰

Hroboň's conception of mysticism is closely related to physical perception. From negative sensations (mostly pain), it goes towards a more spiritual dimension (liberation from pain and carnality thanks to divine intervention). Basically, the lyrical subject is not directly describing mystical experiences. Nevertheless, he is heading towards mystical experiences in several forms. He is directly living them. He invites the readers to live them and acts as mediator. It is actually the same understanding as in the eschatology of Millennialism (or Millenarianism or Chiliasm) according to which Christ – after his return (parousia) shall really rule on earth for one thousand year. It appears like a real inherent law and Hroboň is concretely defining and circumscribing it (e.g. in the poem *Svatopomstopej*¹¹, he calls on God by shouting apocalyptic visions reminding the “End time”).

10 We observe that – in the case of poetic art – even in ancient times authors have always considered possible connections of poetry and music on the basis of rhythm, melody, etc. The song – as a poetic genre – was appreciated by both types of Slovak Romanticism, although matters and forms were different.

11 Approximate translation: “sing in the name of holy vengeance” (it is a personalized title).

V síle najsvätejšej pomsty...
 zodvihni sa víchrobúrou
 od voztoku, sudca zeme!
 Pust' úžas na pýchy plemä;
 zrúť veľmore hromobitia
 na rúhavé národy,
 na besúnske potvory;
 ohňomorom spál tyranstvo,
 že užiznie tvoja zem...
 až dotiaľ, ó, bezbožníci!
 (Hroboň 1991, 169)

In the strength of the holiest vengeance...
 hit storm-tempest
 guard, judge of the earth!
 Desert, amazement for the breed of pride;
 tumble ocean thunderstorm
 over blasphemous nations,
 over raging monsters;
 burn the tyrants with fire-sea,
 and your earth will be quenched...
 yes, that far, oh ungodly!

As we have already mentioned, the above reported verses confirm that Hroboň speaks with the strong iron voice of Old-Testament prophets. The verses do describe the way in which transformation shall take place and its results. The lyric subject appeals and calls on the Old-Testament God who appears, in many respects, irreconcilable and punishing. This is the way we should also perceive the motifs of connection between the natural elements and the transformation of the world, in the shape of neologisms. Indeed, there is no storm (in the common meaning of this word), but there is a storm-tempest which our human senses do not fully know yet. Here, a specific role is played also by auditory perception, through cumulation of consonants provoking cacophony as sign of bad omen and forboding. Similarly, another composed locution – fire-sea – represents two destructive elements. Blasphemous nations are described as raging monsters. The original adjective is “besúnsky”, which we can perceive as a derivative of the word “besný” [mad, rabid], “besnejúci” [raving, raging].

His invocation and appeal to God is resulting from an exposed inevitability, which is reached once again by using neologisms (like the verb “zajagúriť”). Lubica Somolayová has meticulously studied the form and presence of mysticism in Hroboň's poetry. In most of the cases, when she interprets his neologisms or archaisms she makes a morphematic, morphologic, and etymologic analysis; and she notices that onomatopoeia plays an important role in the formation and derivation of new words. Even in the above reported case, we notice that a non-existing verb in the Slovak lexicon does evoke exhortation to act, by means of its suffix. It is a very specific and divine expression, not so easy to understand with our senses and not yet fully experienced by man. “Zajagúri” can be freely translated it as “intervene”. Nevertheless, by considering the previous verse (where the form “zajagaj sa” [shine] is reported), it appears like a sort of connection of the already mentions meanings, enriched with the disharmonious consonant “r” (which – in the given context – evokes something ruining, devastating, and blasting in its full destructive strength).

The poet exponentiates his call with a climax supported by the adjectival superlative prefix “naj”. In graphical terms, it is set apart through the use of capital letter at

the beginning of the word – which represents the highest and absolute degree of attribution: The Holiest, the Most appalling! Almighty! Interpunction (as exclamation marks) allows the evocation of the intended impression of loud immediacy.

Praboh Otec, Syn, Duch svätý!
Svatopomstou samokliaty,
zajagaj sa v sile pomsty;
zajagúri, Najsvätejší,
zajagúri, Najhroznejší!
Zajagúri, Všemohúci!
V sile najsvätejšej pomsty...
(Hroboň 1991, 169)

Almighty God, Son, Holy Spirit!
Holy vengeance and self-curse,
shine in the strength of the vengeance;
intervene, you the Holiest,
intervene, you the Most appalling!
Intervene, the Almighty!
In the strength of the most holy vengeance...

Consequently, even the victory of the Slovak people (intended as “one-thousand-year kingdom” and the creation “of new heaven and new earth”) is described with the same stormy, obscure, and depressive atmosphere.

A frequent motif in the poetry of messianists (appearing in different forms) is the destruction of the world based on prophecies and visionary messages. This is the way in Hroboň evoked the feelings of awe and fear. In his case, the apocalyptic or chiliastic visions are strongly inspired directly by St John’s Book of Revelation. This New-Testament book describes things that shall imminently occur, not from the point of view of time, but from the point of view of God. It is the final stage of salvation history. It is possible to state that Hroboň’s lyrical subject is a mystagogue introducing the reader to the secret of world transformation. He is a prophet predicting historical inevitability of decay and ruin, before the establishment of a perfect and rightful world order. Let’s report the verses that – in my opinion – represent the most frequently quoted passage of *Svatopomstopej*:

Plesajte, zeme pevniny,
Tatier svätých vozvyšiny.
Plesajte, prarodné víly,
tajomných dolín sily...
Môj ide k vám prabožský Syn,
prabytný Svaroh Hospodin.
Ustúpteže svetov svety,
ustúpteže vekov veky
(Hroboň 1991, 176)

Exult, lands of the earth,
sacred hills and heights of the Tatra mountains.
Exult, mother fays,
forces of secret valleys...
My divine Son is coming to you,
distinct Mount of the Lord.
Step aside, worlds of the world,
step aside, ages of the age

The author is considering these phenomena in a national and supranational context, where he replace the eligibility of a single nation with the supranational idea of pan-slavism.

The poetry of romantic messianists may appear masculine because of the preferred use of male grammar gender, but the concepts of “Tatra mountain” and “mother” are seen as a suffering maternal fluid over her child: cursed and demolished Slovak – Slavic nation. Probably this role was played by the vivid devotion for the Mother of Jesus – the Virgin Mary – which was quite strong in Slovakia¹² (despite the fact that Marian devotion was present mainly in Catholic milieus in Europe and Hodža was a Protestant)¹³. In his poems we find marvellous adoring calls on Mary in triadic shape, e.g. in the *Pejan skalného ducha* [Song of the strong spirit]: virgin – mother – woman:

Ó, matislavo, ó, Mária!
 Všemoci teba neprečaria:
 Ty svätodušná milostena,
 Všahdy si panna – matka – žena.
 Oroduj za to srdce biedno...
 (Hodža 2010, 326)

Oh glorious mother, oh Mary!
 No powers can bewitch you:
 You are holy in spirit and grace,
 you are everywhere virgin – mother – woman.
 Pray for this distressful heart...

We have presented several specificities of the expressive and thematic repertoire of messianists even by means of quotations from poems of Hroboň and Hodža, which is deemed as representative in terms of orientation; and we have also tried to show the way these specificities work. In their poetry, the above mentioned authors very often exploited imperatives, exclamations, etc. Their works are then extraordinary appellative, which is – in a certain sense – in contrast with the basic idea of poetical art (notably lyrics directed to the interior of people and subjectively tuned). The messianists do link these two trends together. They want the mystical experience to become reality, this is the main aim of their poetry; and with this purpose and prayer, they not only invoke God, but they also invite Him to answer their invocations.

Of course, articulated poetical images (even more complicated because of the linguistic coding) became a target of polemic literary debates; and – back then – the romantic Messianism was perceived as a pathological phenomenon, also because of its demanding fruition requirements and its “utopian” semantic message. Even today, it is not easy to read messianistic texts. Decoding of single poetical images is often impossible. Therefore, when we try to interpret the poems, we tend to proceed in an associative and contextual manner. From the point of view of today’s thoughts, we consider this as a legitimate approach. The poetry of romantic messianists (with its poetic arsenal) has the potential to reach modern readers thanks to its deepness. It can offer an alternative viewpoint on the world and on the position of Romanticism in Slovak literature. Nevertheless, at time of its origin, the artistic imagery of messianists

12 The truthfulness of this thesis is witnessed by the fact the Patron of Slovakia is actually Our Lady of (the Seven) Sorrows (in Latin Mater Dolorosa). In this case, Mary has a title that refers to her sorrows and pain she had to suffer, without possibility of active intervention in Jesus Christ’s life events.

13 Unlike most of Western Europe, in the Protestant milieu of Slovakia, Mary used to play an important role as the woman who was elected by God to be the mother of Jesus – and this was manifested in her veneration and devotion.

was disputable. Back then, people were – indeed – more inclined to simplicity of meanings and clear approach to national issues in practical terms and according to real limits. Many messianistic poems remained unpublished, just as manuscripts. For this reason, they were only gradually discovered by the readers (or sometimes they were not revealed at all). In many cases, they ended in archives as documents witnessing their authors' dreams and desire of freedom and equality of nations as God had established.¹⁴

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