Mystical Love in Zorica Laţcu Teodosia's Lyric

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Key-words: *mystical*, *sacred*, *religious*, *poetry*

1. Background

The aim of this article is to outline some of the features of Zorica Laţcu Teodosia's lyric. The main aspect on which we will focus represents the poet's source of inspiration, thus being the Bible or the Holy Scripture. This is from where she takes a well-known theme, namely: *The songs of Songs*, a theme that had also been approached by the poets Vasile Voiculescu or Ioan Alexandru and to which the poet offers a mystical interpretation. Taking the biblical theme, the love between a young man and a young woman, the poet Zorica Laţcu Teodosia transposes it literary, making use of the tools that are specific to poetry: the symbol, analogy and allegory giving it a spiritual meaning, namely the love between God and man's soul. The divine person is none other than Jesus Christ and the love between the two resembles the love between the Bride and Groom. In a theological sense, the Holy Fathers define man's deification as being the perfection and unification with God. From a literary point of view, the poet transposes this mystical feeling metaphorically, making use of the steps of ecstatic unification: seeing, falling in love, joy, kidnapping, making one of the most beautiful and sensitive poems of Romanian literature. The literary critic D. Mincu (1975: 669-670), respectively the poet and theologian Nichifor Crainic (1944: 274) stated that the poet is in line with modernism not only due to her technique, but also due to her poetic vision.

2. Terminology marks

In order to impose a logical evolution of speech we consider that first and foremost it is mandatory to make a terminological analysis of the operational concepts: mysticism and religion, starting from the definitions given by specialized dictionaries. Afterwards we should discuss the statements of some theologians, interpreters, and literary critics, with respect to the great variety of the given meanings. Thus, according to the Romanian-Greek dictionary, the notions: mystic, mystical, mysticism, are of a Greek origin and represent a family of words made up of the root *mio* that suggests something closed, hidden[1].

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[1] See Greek-Romanian online dictionary on: www.dicţionar.ro.

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In the new *Universal Dictionary of the Romanian Language* (2006: 826) these terms are analysed separately:

> 1. *Mistic* − that deals with religious topics: mystic writer
> 2. *Mistică* − which has a meaning that is difficult to comprehend, that cannot be rationally explained; that remains hidden, secret.
> 3. *Misticism* − idealistic doctrine, of a philosophical and religious nature, which allows communication through revelation, ecstasy, intuition, between man and divinity.

A terminological correlation can be identified at the author Rădulescu Motru with respect to the meanings given to the mystical soul: "a hidden and incomprehensible soul" (1920: 145−152). On the other hand, the term religion comes from the Latin *religio,-onis*, derivative of the verb *religare*- to link, synonymous with the Hebrew *berit*, revealing the free and conscious bond between man and God.

The adjectival form *religious*, *religious* comes from the Latin *religious* and refers to religion: pious, devout (DEX 1998: 913). We can find the same definition in the study of L. Gardet, showing that religion is man's bond with the absolute (1972: 188). Thus, the term *religion* may be explained as being the inner, but especially outer manifestation of piety or of the religious feeling of a community, a people, a person (Mircea 1995: 443). However, this bond is externalized and expressed in a direct dialogue that man, a being seeking the infinite, wants to have with God without intermediaries. Only through love and knowledge can this bound be achieved. In order to better understand this aspect, we should bring into discussion Father Dumitru Stăniloae's study, entitled *Word and mystical love*, in which he defined mysticism:

> coming closer to God, uniting with Him, seeing Him, communion with Him. The word is the only "mediator" between God and man (any bridge, mystical) which could connect God with man (Stăniloae 1938: 195−196).

However, with respect to the manner of translating the metaphysical feeling in a literary language, the literary critic Paul Cornea states the following:

> A specific form of mysticism (…) is ecstasy that consists of the attempt of the loyal to merge with God through mental concentration, solitude but also paranormal experiences such as revelation or prophecies (…) in their essential purity, the mystical phenomena are acts of passion, of hermetically character, that cannot be transmitted to others. They can be described from the outside observing their outer manifestations, or can be interpreted in psychoanalytic or sociological terms, but these explanations have no relevance: it is the same as speaking of music to the one that does not hear or of painting to the one who cannot see. Mysticism becomes intelligible only when it is lived as an illumination, as an inner experience (Cornea 2006: 188−189).

In other words the soul seeking a spiritual way, mystical, "feels", "tastes" the union of soul with God through grace and the description of such an experience seems impossible due to the words that cannot define the indefinable. God gives Himself to the soul directly, beyond any intellectual category. This soul contemplates without intermediaries some of his attributes and even has the

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certitude of fully understating him, without the help of any intellectual notion and without image, the intuitive knowledge that overwhelms him with a joy that cannot be expressed.

3. Historical and theological landmarks

According to Ioan Gh. Savin, professor of mysticism and theologian, the word *mystic* is not found from the begging, but *mystery* is. Since the third century, the word *mystic* enters the Christian mythology with three special meanings:

> 1. A liturgical meaning, in which mystic is the hidden and symbolic meaning of worshipping acts.
> 2. An exegetical meaning, which means a hidden or allegorical meaning of the Holy Scripture
> 3. A theological meaning in which mystic means the higher, deeper and more hidden teachings of the Christian doctrine.

In the fourth century we find the word *mystical* as being attached to Marcel of Ancyra's theology, who speaks about an *ineffable and mystical theology*, and by Dionysius the Areopagite's theories, *mysticism* would receive its true meaning, namely, the secret knowledge of God, a knowledge created by man's sacred union with God (Savin 1996: 32−33). Similarly, Nichifor, theologian and poet, in his course of mysticism defined the following characteristic of mystic:

> mystical life happens due to the Holy Spirit but it demands a ceaseless purification of man; the grace that acts is a special grace; apart from this special grace the gifts of the Holy Spirit intervene that enlighten and give a goodly knowledge to the human soul, making it capable to feel God, the mystical union is often accompanied by extraordinary and miraculous deeds, that however are not necessary; this supernatural feeling is at the same time knowledge and love; and its further effects consist of, among others, a considerable intensification of man's spiritual energies; the climax of the mystical moment is an earthly anticipation of the heavenly happiness (1993: 13−14).

We remember another statement, that of the author Evelyn Underhill, who in her study entitled *Mysticism* analyses precisely this experience:

> For a moment, the mystical can see nature through God's eyes. (…) In that moment everything is beauty, knowing this thing means love and love means duty. Only mystics know what this statement means; but even they find it difficult to explain it. This reality is understood as being God (Underhill 1912: 217).

Analysing this phenomenon, the author Sandu Frunză in the study entitled *A mystical anthropology – introduction in the thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloe,* made the following statement in relation with the ecstatic experience:

> This experience of kidnapping in the apophasis of the love for God has been promoted in the Christian mystical literature as "seeing God's light". In fact the ecstasy of ecstatic light is nothing but the effect felt as a consequence of entering the secret horizon of the uncreated world (Frunză 1996: 64).

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4. Stylistic marks

The author Horia Bădescu in his work entitled *The being's memory. The poem and the sacred* identifies a bound between poetry and mysticism, regarding the way they relate to the sacred and he saw this possible due to the fact that in both of them, in the poem as well as in mysticism there is an interiority which is predisposed to contemplation and to receiving the Being (Bădescu 2008: 16).

It is stated that the mystical poetry begins where the religious poem ends. To be more precise, the mystical poetry is a continuation of the religious poem, a transfiguration of the latter referring to what can hardly be expressed by words from experiencing a state of beatitude, of ecstasy, having as final purpose the communion with the Divinity. In this sense the critic Eugen Dorcescu in his work *The poetic of non-immanence* defines mystical poetry as being "direct living of mystery" (Dorcescu 2009: 31).

The presence of a mystical language in the religious texts, poses some difficulties regarding their approach from a literary point of view. But regarding how to communicate this language and moreover how to approach it, the author André Scrima, in the study "The spiritual experience and its languages", defined the language of spiritual «experience as being the symbol, and the most rigorous method that he indicated was hermeneutics» (Scrima 2008: 5). Similarly, the author Horia Bădescu considered the symbol:

> a representation that brings a secret sense – the epiphany of a mystery. The symbol brings together the signified, signifier and receiver. It brings the world and the all-knowing ego in the horizon of the human Being. The mystery itself cannot be realized other than by symbol and analogy, meaning by instruments specific to poetry (Bădescu 2008: 43−44).

The predominant themes of the author's lyric are: human relation and conversation with God, prayer, defining prayer, the connection between the bride and the groom specific to the Christian vision, all culminating with God's love. In his work we find a search for God, just like in Arghezi's work but, unlike him, the poet finds Him and lives through Him, living that we call mystical. These items can easily be found in Zorica Laţcu's lyric, approaching love through a mystical contemplation of the bride-groom type. Eloquent in this respect are the poems *Eyes*, *You*, *Joy*, *Love*, *Hug*, *The chamber*, *Kidnapping.* The author's poetic work is deeply mystical; here can be found the essential theme of absolute love, of the union with the divine. Thus, in the poem entitled *Gutter*, we can identify an ecstatic state of meeting God that the author puts in words. The poet received the divine message from heaven in the shape of rain drops that collect in the gutter; afterwards, from all of these she makes the divine poem:

> Mai dulci ca mângâierile/ Din streşinile Cerului/ Îmi picură Tăcerile./ Şi cad în ploi – în Lung şiroi,/ Clipă de clipă, picuri moi.// Eu, ca-ntr-un joc/ Fac din poemul meu un scoc/ Să curgă-n el mereu din cer,/ În picuri ploaia de tăceri/ Şi ploaia cade tot mai des/ Pe scoc să curgă-n val dă ghes… (*Scocul*)

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After receiving the grace and experiencing the divine love in an ecstatic way, human deification takes place by changing the soul.This transfiguration is described by the author in the following verses:

> Luminile Tavorului te-nvaţă,/ O, suflete, cum să te schimbi la faţă.// Şi de voieşti să fii un alt Hristos,/ Pe ucenici să-i laşi la poale, jos./ În ploaia harului, pe vârf de stâncă,/ Să guşti singurătatea cea adâncă./ Ci tu aşteaptă colo sus să vie,/ În duh bărbaţii: Moise şi Ilie./ Ei vor veni şi vor grăi cu tine,/ În taină, despre tainele străine./ Şi Moise, omul tare în cuvât,/ Ţi-o da lumina Duhului Prea Sfânt./ Iar omul focului ceresc, Ilie,/ Te va aprinde-n dragostea cea vie./ O, schimbă-ţi faţa, suflete al meu:/ Dintr-un nimic, tu fă-te Dumnezeu!... (*Tavorul*)

Characteristic to the author's lyric is the mystical love between God and the human soul seen as a Bride. This is why we easily identify the source of inspiration of her poetry as being *The Song of Songs*. Translator of the *Divine Love Hymns* of Saint Simion The New Theologian in which God's love for man is revealed, in the poet's vision the human soul is enlightened by the divine fire of love, just like a bride, that searches Christ as a groom with an intense and burning desire and does not stop until she finds Him –it is not difficult for her to approach such a theme.

The poem entitled *Hug* in which we can identify the first step, that of the union between human soul and Christ, which is made possible precisely because the finding of the beloved one takes place by meeting him, through a hug or a divine kiss:

> Când în dumnezeiasca îmbrăţişare/ Noi ne unim cu blândul Mire/ Ce taină negrăită de iubire/ Îi spunem noi în clipa aceea oare? (*Îmbrăţişare*).

On the step of ecstasy, bound to God, the human soul feels that it overcomes itself, it forgets about itself, finds itself in the seventh heaven, fully enjoying the life of the beloved one:

> Ci sufletul e mut de fericire/ Căci iată nici un murmur nu e în stare/ Să spună ce fiori de desfătare/ Simţim atunci, în tainică unire (...) (*Îmbrăţişare*).

The heavenly wedding, as a culminating step of the mystical ecstasy, represents the full union, the total identification with the other. This state is called mystical wedding, because the union between the bride and groom is eternal and complete.

> În juru-ne simţim că totul piere/ Ci numai noi cu El în El unite/ Gustăm sărutul, sfânta mângâiere (*Îmbrăţişare*).

In all these steps, the love between the bride and groom is due to the fire of divine love. This love lights passion, melts, unifies and identifies the two persons that are in love in a complete mystification:

> Şi atunci, de focul lui ceresc topite,/ Cu El, pe Crucea Lui în grea durere/ Am vrea să fim de mii de ori jertfite (*Îmbrăţişare*).

The union with God is symbolically imagined as a mystical wedding, wrapped in mystery as a total giving:

> Am pregătit culcuşul în iatac/ Pe rug arzând cu flăcări mătăsoase/ Şi-n toată graba mâinilor sfioase/ Mă voi găti iubite, ca să-Ţi plac/ E clipa lungă cât-un veac,/ E clipa

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aşteptărilor duioase/ Dar vei vedea ce dulci, ce luminoase/ Sunt rănile cu care-am să mă-mbrac (*Iatacul*).

We also notice the same theme in the poem *The Call*:

> Vino, Preaiubite-al meu,/ Pe sub bolţi de curcubeu,/ Dă-mi aripi de Heruvim,/ Mână-n mână să plutim,/ În grădini de frumuseţi,/ Din eterne dimineţi.../ (…)/ Vino, preaiubita mea,/ Pe sub punţi de peruzea,/ Cu lumini de foc ceresc/ Haina să ţi-o împodobesc (*Chemarea*).

In the poem *Silence* the poet meditates contemplating this state which is related to love:

> Cuvintele pe care nu le-am spus,/ Sunt tot atâtea trepte ce pogoară,/ Cu sufletul tot mai adânc m-am dus,/ Pe treptele tăcerii, ca pe-o scară./ Ca-ntr-un cuprins de peşteră boltit,/ M-am coborât în lumea nerostirii,/ Şi-n cutele de piatră i-am gătit,/ Acolo-n fund, un ascunziş Iubirii./ Cuvintele pe care nu le-am spus,/ Sunt tot atâtea trepte de tăcere:/ Adânc în mine, mai adânc m-am dus,/ Acolo, unde orice vorbă piere./ De-acolo, din limanul necuprins,/ Din lumea fără mal a nerostirii,/ Pe treptele tăcerii s-au prelins/ Din ascunziș, luminile iubirii (*Tăcere*).

In the poem entitled *Wonderer* the author describes that "beatitude of the soul" of which the mystic speaks and also lives with intensity:

> Mi te-ai întors iar, suflete hoinar,/ Atât de obosit şi de murdar./ Pe unde-ai fost, de-mi vii acum,/ Atât de plin de praful de pe drum?/ Cu fața galbenă și suptă,/ Cu părul năclăit,/ Cu haina ruptă.../ Departe am fost, sus, sus, departe,/ Trecut-am hotarele lumii deșarte!/ Sunt beat de dragostea tăriei,/ Și am gustat din vinul veșniciei./ Nu mă-ntreba nimic, ci stai,/ Căci port pe haine pulbere din rai./ Pe tălpile și-n palmele mele,/ Port încă pulbere de stele./ Pe părul meu, pe strai,/ Port încă roua crinilor din rai./ Și ochii poartă încă-n ei,/ Din strălucirea veșnică, scântei./ Sunt beat-de vinul/ Sfintei bucurii!/ Mai lasă-mă așa!/ Nu mă trezi!.../ Prin cer, departe-am hoinărit,/ M-am îmbătat și-s fericit!/ Nu mă peria și nu mă curăți/ Port pulberea seninei veșnicii! (*Hoinar*).

The poem *I carry you in me*, encodes in itself, with the help of the symbol, the love and the relation between God and man through a full experience. About this poem Andrei Andreicuţ states that "man without sins arrives at a union with God and, thus also at knowing God, as well as at the union with Him. And the union with Him is true Love" (Andreicuţ 2002: 190):

> Te port în suflet, ca pe-un vas de preț,/ Ca pe-o comoară-nchisă cu peceți,/ Te port în trup, în sânii albi și grei,/ Cum poartă rodia sămânța ei./ Te port în minte, ca pe-un imn sfințit,/ Un cântec vechi, cu Crai din Răsărit./ Și port la gât, neprețuit șirag,/ Strânsoarea cald-a brațului tău drag./ Te port în mine tainic, ca pe-un vis,/ În cer înalt de noapte te-am închis./ Te port, lumină rumenă de zori,/ Cum poartă florile mireasma lor./ Te port pe buze, ca pe-un fagur plin./ O poamă aurită de smochin,/ Te port în brațe, horbote subțiri,/ Mănunchi legat cu grijă, fir cu fir./ Cum poartă floarea rodul de cais,/ Adânc te port în trupul meu și-n vis (*Te port în mine*).

In the poem *The Eyes* we identify the poet's desire to illustrate the meaning "of seeing the Divinity":

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> Ridici pleoape mari de neguri grele/ Și ochii Tăi, lumină, mi-i arăți./ O, Doamne și stăpân vieții mele,/ Sunt ochi de foc, ce-aprind pustietăți./ Sunt mari ciorchini de boabe luminoase,/ Din ele raze curg, în loc de vin./ Sunt ochii Tăi ca spadele tăioase,/ Arzând cu răni adânci și dureroase,/ În cearcănele cerului senin (*Ochii*).

This can only bring a feeling of spiritual joy that overwhelms the entire human being:

> Ca sufletul de schimnic în pustie,/ Adânc pătrund în tine, Bucurie!/ Străbat încet cărările deșarte,/ Încolo, înspre miezul tău, departe./ (...)/ Cu sufletul de schimnic în pustie,/ Te preamăresc, Izvor de bucurie! (*Bucurie*).

Of course, we can identify the recognition of the beloved person in the poem entitled more than enlightening, *You:*

> De când în noapte, Doamne, Te-am simțit,/ Atât de-aproape. Dragoste era?/ Stăteam pierdută-n Tine, undeva,/ Învăluită cald în Dumnezeu.../ Și Tu erai în mine, Doamne-al meu! (*Tu*).

The ecstatic *living,* that is floating out of one's body, as the Holy fathers would call it, is expressed in the poem entitled *Kidnapping*:

> Mergeam prin întuneric, undeva./ Făclie-aveam, gătită dinadins;/ Dar iată că din umbră mi-o a stins/ Și m-a luat de mână Cineva./ N-am întrebat nimic. Pășeam arar/ Și-așa-mi părea cărarea de fierbinte,/ Că tainic gândul stăruia în minte:/ Să nu-mi atârne haina jos în jar./ Simțeam dogoarea flăcării în jur/ Și mă uimeam că nu-i vedeam lucirea./ Mergând, știam că las în urmă firea/ Și-am început să văd, ca printr-un ciur./ Cuvinte, cum nu pot să prind în voi,/ Simțirea mea, în voi ca să rămână?/ Mergeam prin flăcări negre, mână-n mână,/ Topiți în veșnicie, amândoi./ Și-atât era de dulce acest mers,/ Încât aș fi dorit ca niciodată/ Să nu atingem ținta-ndepărtată./ Dar bezna-n jur s-a sfâșiat, s-a șters./ N-am cunoscut pe Cel ce mă ducea,/ Și nici n-am vrut. Lumina se mărise,/ Pășeam prin alb, vecia-ncărunțise/ Și flacăra din juru-mi strălucea./ Cu ochii beți de albul mut, cătam/ Să văd un chip: o umbră sau o rază./ Ci ochi-mi n-au avut nimic să vază,/ Decât lumina albă. Înotam/ În valuri de lumină, undeva./ Și n-am știut că asta e iubire./ Să treci din beznă în nemărginire,/ Cu mâna strânsă-n mâinile Cuiva./ Când ne-am oprit, s-a-ntors privirea mea/ Spre Cel ce mă dusese. Și uimită,/ Am cunoscut lumina nesfârșită,/ Că toată, valuri, de la El venea (*Răpire*).

Therefore, we can state that the poet Zorica Laţcu Teodosia inspired herself from the Christian mystics, especially from *The Songs of Songs*. She takes the biblical theme, the love between the Bride and Groom – symbolically – between divinity and the human soul, she transposes it literally, making use of specific means: the symbol and allegory. Furthermore, she uses the steps of ecstatic union: seeing, falling in love, joy, kidnapping to describe this feeling that seems that cannot be understood by rational means.

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Abstract

The present work is part of my dissertation paper and has as theme, the magazine "Gândirea" and the literary trend Gândirismul, which outlines the mystical-religious poetry as being a scientific work. In my paper it can be found unprecedented data about Zorica Laţcu Teodosia, one of the promoters of the mystical religious poetry. Making her debut at "Gândirea" magazine, her poetry is inspired by the gândirist movement. There are some reasons for which we do not know much about her life and her work, one of them being the political one, meaning the communist regime. The communist ideology forbade any manifestation of the sacred in Romanian culture.

The operational concepts of mystic poetry and religious poetry are being discussed, analysed, compared, based on a study made by Eugen Dorcescu, *The poetic of non-immanence*.The terms mystical, sacred, religious, are analysed making use of several Romanian and foreign dictionaries, then compared.

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